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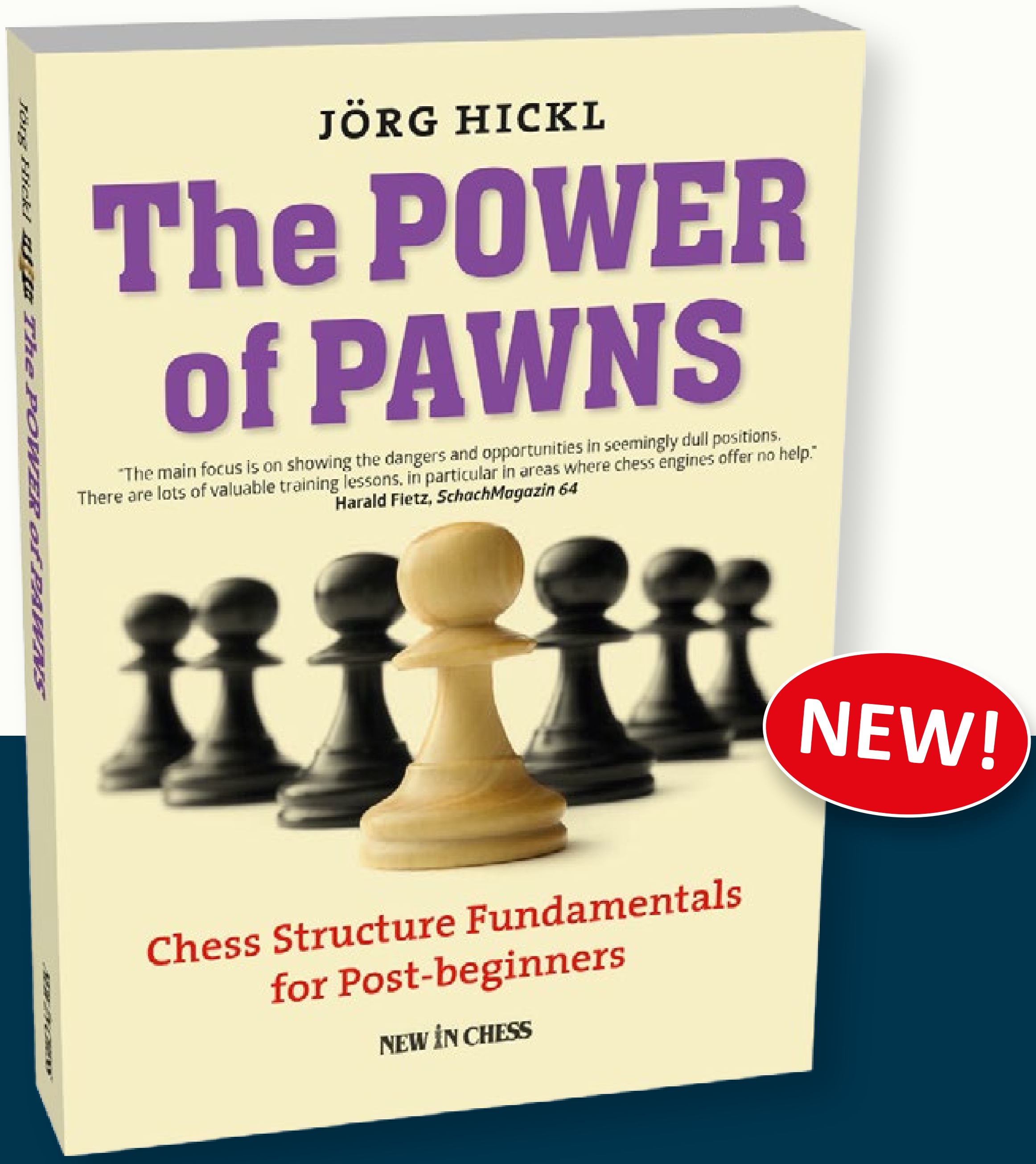
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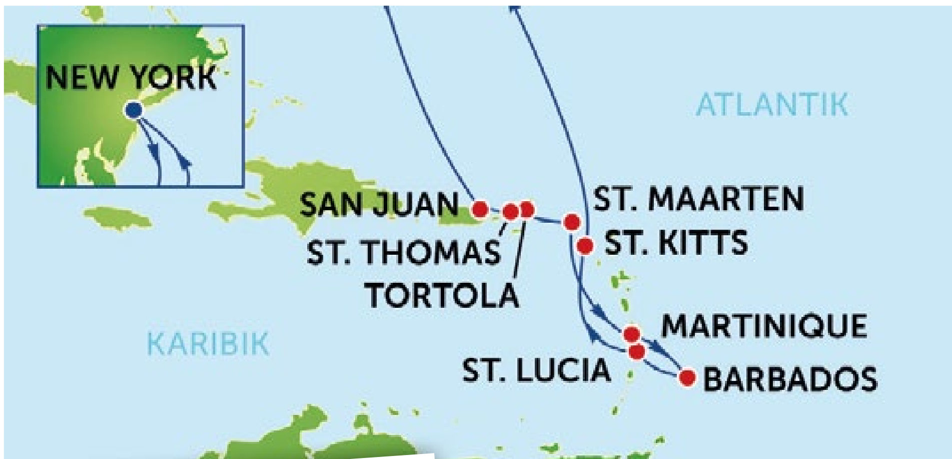

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COVER
Hikaru Nakamura: New In Chess

> ‘Bobby’s mental problems already showed when he was very young. He was 16 when we were training at Grossinger’s, a luxurious hotel with all facilities outside New York. And he showed me a photo of Hitler and said that he thought he was a great guy.’ – *Pal Benko*

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A Special Gift

'It's Bobby Fischer again. He refuses to go away', Helgi Olafsson wrote some months ago on our pages in a mix of surprise and resignation. Of course, Helgi is right. Bobby Fischer is here to stay. We will not stop admiring and enjoying the American's fascinating games and achievements, while we remain confounded by his tragic life.

Ever since I met Fischer in Sveti Stefan in 1992 and saw the dark side of my childhood hero, I have been talking to people that were close to him. From the organizer of the match in 1972, Gudmundur Thorarinsson, to the Icelanders that welcomed him back in 2005. From star photographer Harry Benson to his good friend Eugene Torre, who touchingly compared Bobby to a child that needed extra attention, a child with a special gift that we should enjoy.

But during those years there always was one man I hoped to meet one day, the man that knew Bobby Fischer best: Pal Benko. Finally that opportunity arose. You can read his take on Fischer in this issue. And what a great personality and creative spirit Benko is himself!

Yes, the heroes of yesteryear keep inspiring us, as Matthew Sadler argues convincingly in his column, pledging allegiance to Chigorin, Steinitz, Alekhine and Karpov!

The heroes of today are the legends of tomorrow and we have a fine bouquet for you. Magnus Carlsen analyses his Tata Steel win against Mickey Adams. Take a ringside seat and follow the thoughts of the best player on the planet. Spectacular!

> 'Take a ringside seat and follow the thoughts of the best player on the planet. Spectacular!'

And there's our own Anish Giri, witty and to the point as ever, and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, who has reclaimed his place among the very best. And a great attacking game by Fabiano Caruana, who may well be the top favourite in the Candidates' tournament in Moscow. What else? Did I mention Chinese stars Hou Yifan and Wei Yi?

Whether you'll be looking for chess entertainment at the highest level or useful practical tips to improve your own play, you will be served generously. Take your time as you choose from a wide choice of special gifts!

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
Editor-in-Chief

Snowboarding

No, this isn't the latest attempt by FIDE to have chess accepted into the Winter Olympics. It was the aftermath of snowstorm 'Jonas' that hit the East Coast of the USA on Friday, 23rd January that brought an almost total whiteout to many great metropolises. And it was one for the history books, with 25.1 inches of snow falling in Central Park (where meteorological records are officially measured from) on the Saturday, making it the third greatest in New York City since 1869, missing the record by a tenth of an inch.

But for chess players, the only park of interest in NYC is Washington Square Park. Since the early 1950s, this has been a legendary spot for many to eke out a living by playing blitz for cash or perhaps giving 'lessons'. And when the great dig-out began on the Sunday morning, among the first to do so were some of the chess regulars of the park, who were eager to get back to playing, even if they had to clear their own path through the snow to get to a board. And on hand to capture it with his old-school Leica M3 film camera and 35mm Summaron lens – that gave an almost retro 1950s feel to the scene – was NYC street photographer Charlie Musick. ■

NIC's Café

On the Beach

In Tinseltown, artistic liberties are par for the course to spice up the plot in a movie. A major one that has come in for criticism in the Bobby Fischer biopic *Pawn Sacrifice*, is where our hero wakes up in his suit and tie on the Santa Monica beach after losing to Boris Spassky in the 2nd Piatigorsky Cup of 1966, and sees his Soviet foe emerging from the sea. And he starts ranting 'I'm coming for you!! You hear me?! I'm coming for you!!!'

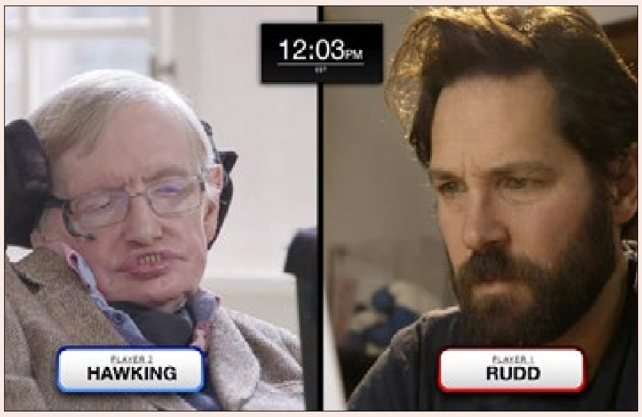
Chess is a beach. Gary Gallerie has no idea that he is playing the World Champion.

It was silly, but more importantly, it never happened. And anyway, can you imagine a World Champion on a California beach throwing down chess challenges? Well, as a matter of fact... Immediately after winning the Tata Masters, Magnus Carlsen headed to Los Angeles to mix a little business with pleasure. And while strolling on a sun-kissed Venice Beach, he spotted a man with a black baseball cap and Ray-Ban shades sitting at a chessboard, looking for an opponent. So, he immediately threw down the gauntlet by challenging him to a game. His opponent was Gary Gallerie – and he had simply no idea who his challenger was. Gary and four friends had recently set up a little chess club on Venice Beach, called the Tuesday Knights (yes, you guessed it: they meet on a Tuesday!). They were all just casual players, with no idea just who the superstars of chess were. And then along came Magnus, who didn't let on to Gary what his rating was and certainly not that in fact he was the World Champion! But at the end, he revealed all, and magnanimously offered to make a donation to the beach chess club funds.

That night, Gary left a message for Magnus on his Facebook page: 'I didn't know that I was playing the world champion! Magnus just approached our little chess club on the beach and asked if we let anyone play. Of course I said yes and not till after my resignation did he even let on that he was a grandmaster! He even wanted to donate to the club, because I mentioned before the game we accept donations. I refused his donation after he divulged his ranking. Magnus, I was and am totally honored to have been at the chessboard with you. You are a true gentleman.'

A Quantum Leap for Chess

A final project with a chess theme for a class taken 'for fun' at the University of Southern California has turned into something of a cause célèbre for its inventor Chris Cantwell. The 34-year-old graduate student designed a game called Quantum Chess that quickly went video viral on YouTube, as it featured physicist Stephen Hawking and actor Paul Rudd, Marvel's new bite-sized superhero Ant-Man.



Stephen Hawking and Paul 'Ant-Man' Rudd, opponents in a most unusual chess game.

Hawking and Rudd battle each other in a game of Quantum Chess in a video narrated by actor Keanu Reeves titled 'Anyone Can Quantum.' As we go to press it has received 1,737.521 views. 'I'm speechless,' Cantwell said of its instant success. 'I'm just blown away.' The graduate student spent two months assembling a team of professional game developers to turn the game into something that can help people understand the physical world – and did it by using a new chess variant that now everyone is talking about. He has since launched a Kickstarter campaign at pledgequantumchess.com. There, the game can be ordered with a donation.

Cantwell said Quantum Chess is not a game that teaches quantum mechanics or requires knowledge of quantum mechanics. The rules are the same as chess with some modifications, including the addition of the quantum move, which allows players to create superpositions and gives them access to effects such as entanglement and interference. The goal is to kill the king, not checkmate, he explained.

In the video, it is obvious that Rudd and Hawking are big fans of real chess – and at the start, Rudd is seen cramming before he took on the famed physicist by reading through *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess* and scanning several online chess sites.

Feel the Bern

It's election season over in America and the important question that needs to be answered is: which candidate is the chess player? And the reply could well be 'Feel the Bern' himself, Bernie Sanders, the very independently-minded socialist senator from Vermont, who is posing problems on the political chessboard for Democrat front-runner Hillary Clinton, with news emerging of a past Sanders news-story that could well help him garner the chess vote.

It turns out that in 2014, just weeks before he officially declared he would be contesting the race for the White House, the two-term senator was publicized in a local newspaper taking part in a Vermont Development Authority fund-raising charity simultaneous against the state's lone national chess master, David Carter. Playing alongside local elementary school kids, Sanders took the role of 'very good player' in the simul – and Carter explained to the media that members of the whole Sanders family are big chess fans; and they particularly encourage chess in school.

Presidential Candidate Bernie Sanders: 'We are in a lot of trouble.'

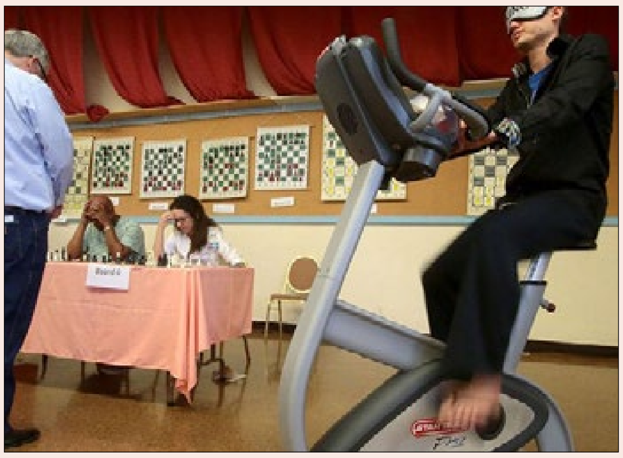
But not long into the action, Sanders was seen deep in concentration with fingertips pressed together, head clutched in both hands, then with hands searching the right ear and the chin for answers that were needed on the 64-squares never mind the campaign trail. Half an hour later (and perhaps spoken like a true politician): 'We are in a lot of trouble,' Sanders uttered to his grandson, whom he'd recruited for help.

Playing a Blinder

There's many of us who miss the Melody Amber tournament, and not just for its Monte Carlo locale – it was the only major event on the elite circuit that seriously promoted that age-old chess master party-trick of playing blindfold chess. It may be gone, but one player is certainly doing his very best to keep the art of playing blindfold in the public eye. Step forward Uzbek GM Timur Gareev, now one of the top ten players in the U.S., who seems destined for the Harry N. Pillsbury Award for blindfold bravado, if ever there was such an award.

The current world record for a blindfold simultaneous was set in 2011 by the German master Marc Lang with 46 boards (+25, =19, –2). Now, 28-year-old Gareev has plans to try to break the record with 50 boards in October in Chicago. He's currently in training for this, and last month he visited Palm Springs, California to give an exhibition of his blindfold prowess to the Coachella Valley Chess Club.

Over a five-hour period, he challenged 12 highly rated players simultaneously and won 11 games with one draw. Where's the challenge in that, we hear you all ask? Well, throughout his blindfold simultaneous, Gareyev was also hooked up to an exercise bike and – wearing flip-flops, a track suit and a big silver blindfold with the word 'King' on it – had to frantically peddle as he played!



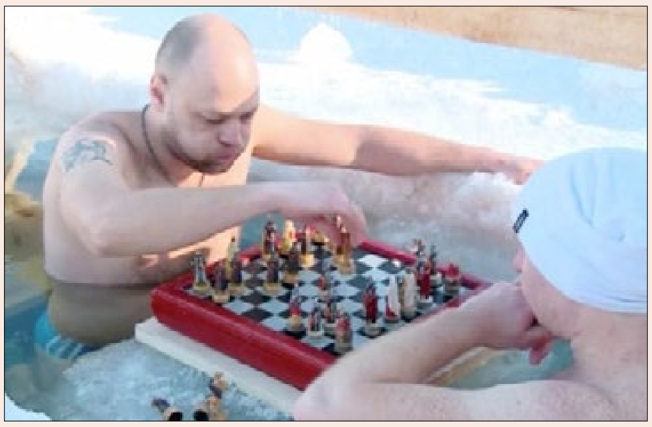
Timur Gareev: Anything to promote blindfold chess.

'Playing blindfold chess is like driving a race car, and regular chess is driving a regular car,' he said after his simultaneous exhibition. 'It's using the same strategy but in a more exciting and challenging way. I love it.'

Chilling Out

These crazy Russian men found their own way to 'chill' by attempting to popularize a new chess variant – by playing in outdoor subzero icy waters wearing just their underpants. And the local TV report of it quickly caught the attention of all the global cable news networks.

In a lake in Russia's Ural mountain region the swimmers plunged into water of around 5 degrees Celsius for a game of chess they say that tested their mental and physical strengths. 'The benefit of this is that you get to work on your physical and mental stamina, to see how your body is prepared to withstand any obstacles that life brings on,' said winter swimmer Denis, as his rival contemplated his next move across the board.



Chess in a frozen lake. A perfect way to test your mental and physical strengths.

'Playing in icy cold water, it helps to concentrate', added opponent Roman. 'One can even work out a technique to enable one to stay in the water for longer; this is a big benefit of chess. When you get in, you face a certain fear barrier, but once you get past it, you just test your tolerance, stamina.'

Speed was a key factor for success in an icy water chess game, the players said, as the sub-zero temperature encouraged them to make the next move within seconds. Each game lasted about 10 minutes.

The idea to play chess in icy water was not exactly a novelty, as another member explained: 'The idea for this competition came very much out of nowhere. We found some files on winter swimmers who played chess in Soviet times, we had it on our minds for a bit... so we supported the idea and decided to start playing.' ■

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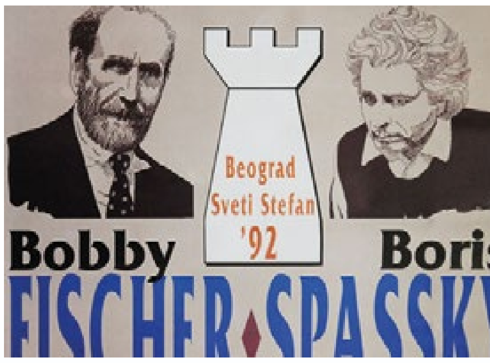
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Is chess a sexist sport?

Last year, senior player Garry Kasparov felt so outraged by Nigel Short's column on women in chess in this magazine that he briefly made a comeback to castigate the verbose Englishman. No matter what one must have thought of Nigel's article, it was clear by then that he had been punished extensively for using his freedom of speech to mention a simple fact: Not many women play chess and of those that do, proportionally few reach the heights of the game. Allowing for the fact that men have inferior emotional intelligence, I shall refrain from speculating about why this is and instead make some other observations:

1) After an interval of 30 years we have mastered Orwell's double-speak as defined in *1984*. I am watching the film *X+Y*, while writing this. Centred on the math Olympiad, the film features more boys with Asperger's than girls. This is a misrepresentation; an under-representation of girls. Their representation has tripled over the last 30 to 40 years, from 0.2% to 0.6%. In the film the girls are there as love interests only, of course.

2) A rethink of Women's chess is needed. We have special conditions for women, we have lots of young girls with a talent for chess, but less than a handful has made it past 2600. A close friend of mine recently speculated about whether the special Women's titles have outlived their importance and are now just an expression of the low expectations FIDE has of women. In other words: *Are chess titles and (adult) gender separated events institutionally sexist?*

3) How do we match up against other sports? Thinking about it, I naturally thought about tennis. I love tennis. In tennis there is 'pay-equality' – the same prizes for men and women in Grand Slams. But that's where it ends.

I am a member of one of the biggest health and racquets clubs worldwide: 268 branches on three continents, valued at £1.3 billion. Rarely do we feel this conglomerate status in the picturesque outskirts of Glasgow, but we did recently. Outside official tournaments, Club Championships and league matches, we have round-robin training tournaments, in which the challenge is to get people to enrol.

Write to us

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This spring, I lobbied the best players in the club to enter the gents' doubles tournament. A coup that encouraged others to participate was the participation of the club's best doubles player. Sadly, his partner could not participate, so he asked me to find someone else. I asked Helena, who for the second year in a row had qualified for all three finals in the club championship (but had food poisoning on the day). Everyone was happy, except the Racquet's Manager. He feared it would open 'the floodgates for women' wanting to participate in Gents' events. I vigorously complained, in the course of which I discovered that it is company policy not to risk offending men by having women participating in the same tournaments.

To have nothing against women, but not wanting to upset others is called an unconscious bias. Or sexism by proxy, if you like.

Chess is a wonderful sport. Men aged 18-32 have no physical advantage over others and it took us half a moment to rid ourselves of sexist division at the Olympiads back in the 1980s. Our discrimination is positive and based on a wish to expand the popularity of chess.

We are still ahead of most sports in breaking down the gender barriers; it would be wonderful if the chess community looked seriously for the next step forward, rather than following the rest of society in the infantile 'shoot the messenger' approach to gender politics, in which the issue itself is neglected but outspoken individuals are burned at the stakes in atonement...

Jacob Aagaard
Glasgow, United Kingdom

Just Checking

I've just unwrapped my latest copy of New In Chess, 2016/1, and read your Editor-in-Chief's remarks about the Just Checking column.

People don't like it? You're joking!? If there is anything I look at, it is the remarks these, usually gifted and intelligent, people make when asked simple and obvious questions.

Whether strange, witty, poignant or vague, these people show the rest of the world that chess players are not just local boring buffs but people with imagination and flair.

Don't ever consider replacing these enlightening insights with something like ... rook endings! (Although I am sure most of your readers need a lesson or two on that subject.)

Gordon C. Fowler
Mönchengladbach, Germany

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Their Favourite Tournaments

In January, Magnus Carlsen won the annual Tata Steel tournament in Wijk aan Zee, the Netherlands. It was Carlsen's fifth victory in the tournament (which has changed its name over the years as the sponsor changed), tying him for the most victories with Viswanathan Anand, the ex-World Champion. Carlsen said that he has a special affinity for the tournament because it was where he made his big international breakthrough at 13, when he won the C-group. Carlsen is not alone in having one tournament where he just seems to do better. The graphic below shows the number of times each player won or tied for first in each tournament. *DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN*

Vladimir Kramnik

Dortmund Sparkassen Chess Meeting

By virtue of the number of times he has won it, no other player is more closely identified with one tournament than Kramnik is with this annual tournament in Germany.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1995	*1996*	*1997*	*1998*	*2000*	*2001*	*2004*	*2006*	*2007*	*2009*	*2011*

Garry Kasparov

Linares

The tournament is no more – the last edition was in 2010 – but while it existed, Garry Kasparov made it his priority. It was so important to him, it was where he announced his retirement in 2005, after tying for first one last time.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1990	*1992*	*1993*	*1997*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2005*

United States Championship

It is fitting that these two fierce rivals share the record for most U.S. titles. After Fischer passed Reshevsky, Reshevsky restored parity with two first place finishes in his late 50s and early 60s.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
← **Samuel Reshevsky**	*1936*	*1938*	*1940*	*1941*	*1942*	*1946*	*1969*	*1972*
Bobby Fischer →	*1957/58*	*1958/59*	*1959/60*	*1960/61*	*1962/63*	*1963/64*	*1964/65*	*1965/66*

Peter Svidler

Russian Championship

Svidler first won his country's national title when he was 17 and did it the last time almost two decades later, when he was 36.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1994	*1995*	*1997*	*2003*	*2008*	*2011*	*2013*

Honorable mentions

The Soviet Championships were even tougher and both Mikhail Botvinnik (1931, 1933, 1939, 1944, 1945, and 1952) and Mikhail Tal (1957, 1958, 1967, 1972, 1974, and 1978) each won or tied for first 6 times.

Joel Benjamin

World Open

It has been the biggest open tournament in the U.S. since its debut in 1973 and often attracts top foreign players. But Benjamin, the American grandmaster, has the distinction of winning or finishing first more than anyone else.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1981	*1984**	*1999*	*2000**	*2001*	*2006*

**Won playoff to become champion.*

Wijk aan Zee

The tournament has been played since 1938, but it is only recently that anyone has won it five times. Kasparov might have won it more than three times (1999, 2000, and 2001) but those were the only years he competed.

	1	2	3	4	5
← **Viswanathan Anand**	*1989*	*1998*	*2003*	*2004*	*2006*
Magnus Carlsen →	*2008*	*2010*	*2013*	*2015*	*2016*

Fair & Square

Quentin Tarantino: 'If the movie works, then it should be suspenseful. There is a long build up, as I put my chess pieces in place. I'm playing chess and I have got to put them all in the right spot before I start killing them off, and I'm asking viewers for some patience. Hopefully the suspense makes it all worthwhile.'
(The American filmmaker talking about the slow build-up to the action scenes in his new movie, The Hateful Eight)

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave: 'Maybe Capablanca... to see if he would, you know, shut my brain off basically. I like challenges.'
(When asked during his masterclass session at the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival which player in history he would like to play against)

Stuart Conquest: 'Sadly, all chess knowledge is completely useless in everyday life, and not realizing this until it is too late, the sorriest examples, individuals of great character and merit, are those who not only are incapable of any kind of non-chess activity, but who also don't understand when to sacrifice the exchange.'

Magnus Carlsen: 'Chess is a tool to make the world a smarter place.'
(In an interview with German newspaper Die Zeit)

Albert Einstein: 'Chess holds its master in its own bonds, shackling the mind and brain so that the inner freedom of the very strongest must suffer.'

Wilhelm Steinitz: 'Like all lunatics I am convinced that the doctors here are madder than I am.'
(In a letter to a friend in Vienna, from New York State Asylum, 1900)

Anatoly Karpov: 'The games of great players are valuable for their way of thinking.'

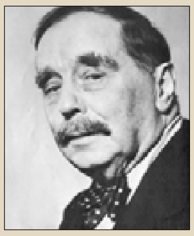
Brian Wall: 'Chess is basically a fight between the pain of losing and the pain of thinking.'
(The American chess coach and author)

Mark Taimanov: 'When I gave concerts I was taking a rest from chess and when I played chess I was resting from the piano. As a result my life has been one long holiday.'
(Congratulations to the Russian concert pianist/grandmaster, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday)

Angela Eagle MP: 'The chess player in me would say you don't discuss your doubts because it gives your opponents a chance to know your weaknesses.'
(The former English junior internationalist-turned-politician, speaking to The Observer newspaper about how chess helped her control her nerves in politics)

Bobby Fischer: 'I'm not a circus performer. I don't perform for children.'
(From Alan Dershowitz's 2013 biography Taking the Stand: My Life in the Law, after he asked Fischer to play a game with his young son, after the American chess icon asked the top lawyer if he would do free legal work for him)

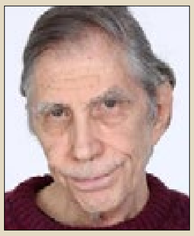
Alan Dershowitz: 'I'm not a circus performer either. I don't perform free legal services to ingrates who refuse to do a small favor for a young child who is learning how to play chess. Find another lawyer and pay him the going rate.'
(The legal-eagle's response to Fischer!)



H.G. Wells: 'The true sweetness of chess, if it can ever be called sweet, is to see a victory snatched, by some happy impertinence, out of the shadows of apparently irrevocable disaster.'

Robert Hübner: 'Chess will never gain mass popularity because it requires too much expertise in analysis.'

David Navara: 'You know, if a doctor makes a mistake, a patient might die. If a pilot makes a mistake, he might get killed, or indirectly kill, hundreds of people. But if a chess player makes a mistake, he just loses one game and sometimes not even that.'
(When asked on Chess24.com 'How do you keep calm after a loss?')



Ralph Charell: 'Do your own thinking independently. Be the chess player, not the chess piece.'
(The 83-year-old American author best known for 'The Magic of Thinking Rich')

Kirsan Ilyumzhinov: 'I don't consider that the US is against me. I'm in favour of America. They gave me sanctions, I gave them 30 chess tournaments.'
(The FIDE President, declaring 2016 the 'Year of Chess' in the U.S., after they put him on a US Treasury blacklist)

NEW IN CHESS

Another milestone for Magnus

Tata Steel Masters 2016. Back row: Wei Yi, Ding Liren, Loek van Wely, Evgeny Tomashevsky, Wesley So, Sergey Karjakin, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

World Champion equals Anand’s record of five wins in Tata Steel

The script was similar to last year. Following a slow overture, Magnus Carlsen got kick-started by Loek van Wely to take control with a string of wins. Perhaps as a telling portent, the only player who came close to challenging the World Champion was Fabiano Caruana, but in the end the American lacked the strength to stop Carlsen from winning his fifth Tata Steel trophy. And talking about records; underpinning the success of the Tata Steel on Tour concept, 3,000 chess fans flocked to the Railway Museum in Utrecht. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** was not the only one who couldn’t believe his eyes.

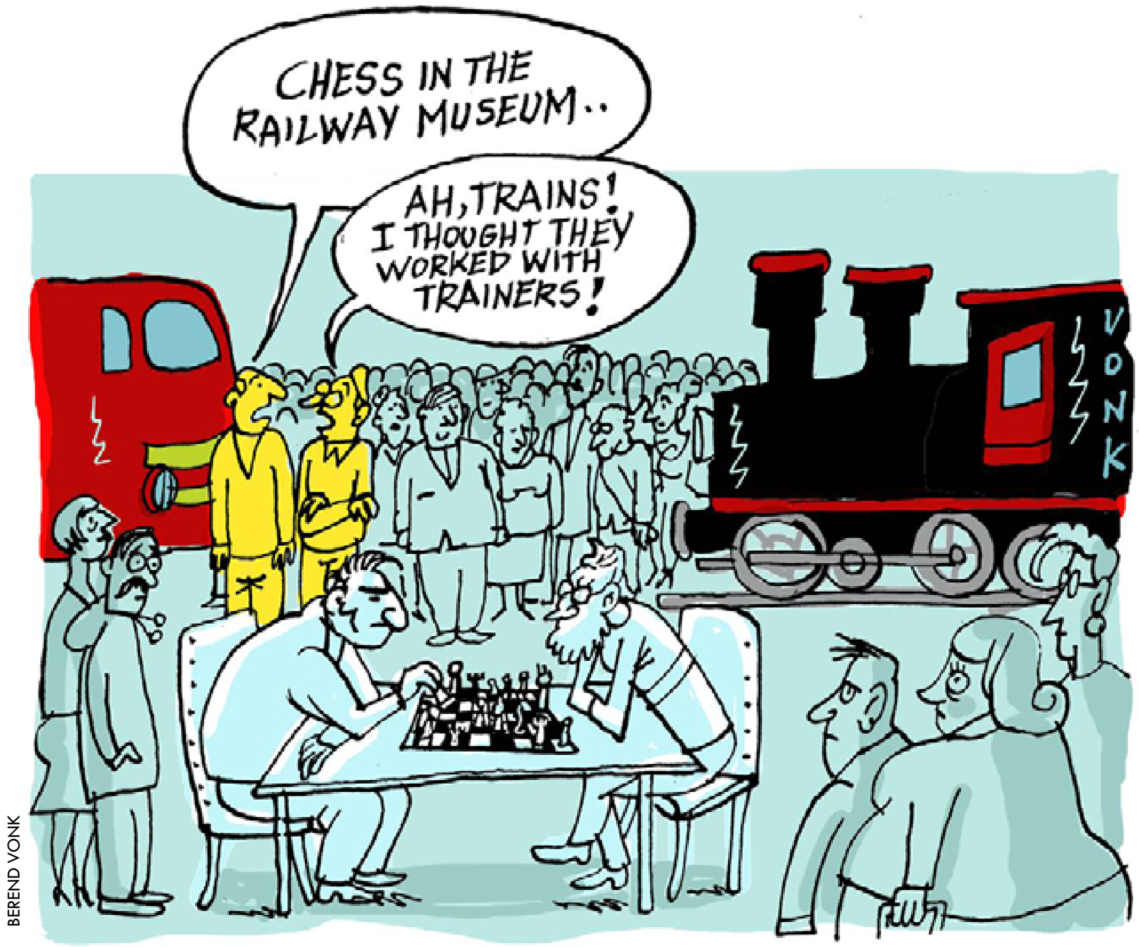
NIET BETREDEN

Front row: Hou Yifan, Mickey Adams, Fabiano Caruana, Pavel Eljanov, Anish Giri, David Navara and Magnus Carlsen.

Whenever chess organizers publish the numbers of visitors to their live transmission it's usually a good moment to reach for a pinch of salt. For some reason, the figures always sound too good to be true and you can only wonder what these heralds of good news are thinking themselves about those dazzling, record-breaking numbers that leave many people with questions and doubts. This is a pity, as it would be extremely useful for the promotion of the game to know precisely and in great detail how many fans actively follow the main events.

On the other hand, organizers rarely if ever mention how many spectators actually turn up at the venue. With good reason. Too often have we seen top players in action in front of an empty hall or with only a couple of dozen people scattered in the first few rows. Even the tournaments that do attract 'crowds', such as Dortmund, the Sinquefield Cup or the London Classic, rarely can boast more than a couple of hundred enthusiasts who want to see their heroes live.

This is why Round 10 of the Tata Steel Masters was such a sensation and created such a buzz. Three thousand people came to the Railway Museum in Utrecht, leaving everyone speculating about 'an explanation' for this unusual number. To begin with, it seems safe to say that the Tata on Tour concept continues to be successful. Partly inspired by the Euwe-Alekhine World Championship matches of 1935 and 1937, and the AVRO tournament in 1938, which travelled all over the Netherlands, Tata Steel introduced rounds outside Wijk aan Zee two years ago. For the press, grandmasters playing in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam or the Dutch Parliament in The Hague proved no-brainers and most of the players quickly got used to the idea of leaving Wijk aan Zee for two rounds as well. This time the first excursion was to the Nemo Science Museum in Amsterdam. Besides the games of Round 5 there were all sorts of side attractions, such as simuls, scientific games and the premiere of the heart-warming documentary *The Dream Multiplier*, about Mustapha Eljarmouni's highly inspirational chess project in an underprivileged neighbourhood in Amsterdam.


CHESS IN THE RAILWAY MUSEUM..
AH, TRAINS! I THOUGHT THEY WORKED WITH TRAINERS!
VONK

BEREND VONK

But the number of visitors in Amsterdam paled in comparison to what we saw in Utrecht. Because Utrecht lies in the heart of the country and can be easily reached by train? Because the city has so many chess clubs? Or because on this day the Railway Museum was for free? This latter fact probably played a part, and it should not be forgotten that on average the museum receives 400 visitors a day without the chess. But the total of 3,000 remains amazing.

One more reason may have been that in Round 10, Anish Giri played against Magnus Carlsen. Giri's achievements in 2015 and his rise to the third place in the world rankings have given his popularity in Holland a significant boost. Then there is 'this little thing' between Giri and Carlsen. Ever since their first game five years ago in Wijk aan Zee, which Giri sensationally won with the black pieces in 22 moves, all their classical encounters have ended in draws. In 2015 they met six times, with Giri having white in four of the games. Again he maintained his positive score against the World Champion, but there was criticism that his wish to keep this score tended to made him too cautious.

Carlsen didn't seem too worried when he was asked to comment on his score against Giri by the Dutch press on the eve of their 13th encounter. He calmly pointed out that for the moment he may have a negative score, but that he has already won many super-tournaments, while Giri still has to win his first.

The game in Utrecht was another relatively calm affair. An inaccuracy

ALINA L'AMI

An amazing 3,000 visitors turned up for Round 10 in the Railway Museum in Utrecht. The huge locomotive behind the players was easily the biggest engine ever allowed into a playing hall.

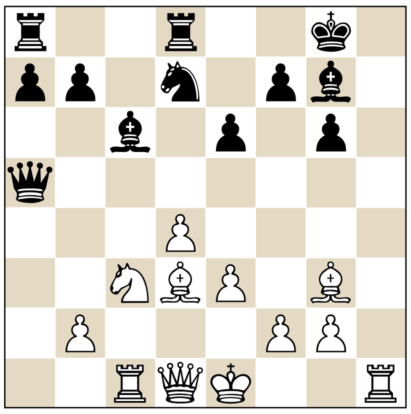
by Carlsen, who again played Black, gave Giri a better position, but when he failed to maintain the pressure, the game soon fizzled out to another draw.

Giri was one of three Candidates who tested their form in Wijk aan Zee. Just like Fabiano Caruana and Sergey Karjakin, he stressed that 13 rounds with such a strong field was a perfect test for the Big One in Moscow in March, which will last 14 rounds. In the end, Giri was not unhappy about his shared fourth place, but he was rightly critical of his uneven play. There may have been moments when he could have been luckier, but there were at least as many occasions where he could have fared worse. Similarly, Karjakin had to experience that, no matter how seriously you want to take a final test, it remains complicated to give your all on the eve of the most important challenge of the year. Karjakin won only one game (against Russian Champion Evgeny Tomashevsky, who was totally unrecognizable) and lost two, to finish on minus-one.

The only Candidate who impressed with fighting and creative play was Fabiano Caruana. His finish was unfortunate, but the American remained a threat to Carlsen till the last round and showed that he will be a big, if not the biggest, favourite in Moscow.

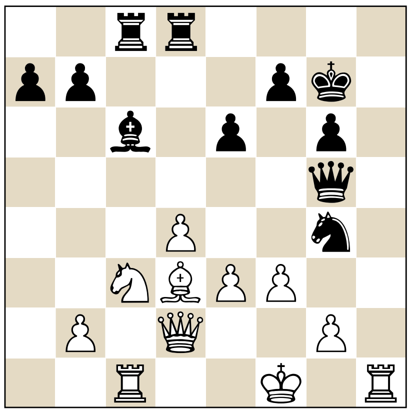
Magnus Carlsen had another slow start. Last year he made two draws and lost to Radek Wojtaszek before tearing away with six consecutive wins. This time he drew his first four games before winning three in a row. Just like last year it was Loek van Wely who was his first victim. At the prize-giving, after he had thanked each and every one, Carlsen said a special word of thanks to Van Wely, 'who is always there to help a friend in need'.

Van Wely, who is always happy to challenge himself, had indicated at the start of the tournament that there were two games for which he was doubly motivated, the one against Giri and the one against the World Champion. What happened in the first game you can read in Giri's comments further down. Against Carlsen he did much better, until he was punished by his poor time management.

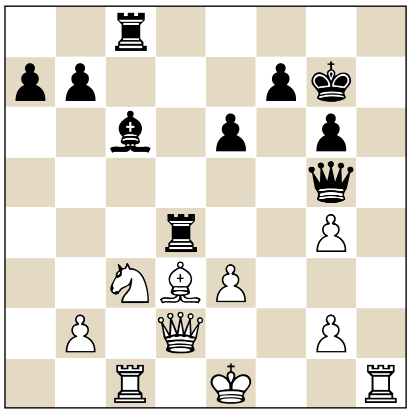


Van Wely-Carlsen
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (5)
position after 18...♕a5

A balanced position, according to Carlsen. But not balanced on the clock, as Van Wely had invested a lot of time. **19.♔f1 ♘f6 20.♗e5 ♖ac8 21.♕d2 ♘g4 22.♗xg7 ♔xg7 23.f3 ♕g5**



A gamble provoked by White's time-trouble that Carlsen afterwards called 'too much'. The move called for was the retreat 23...♘f6. **24.fxg4 ♖xd4 25.♔e1!**



A strong reply. **25...♕e5** As 25...♖xg4 26.♘e4 ♕e5? 27.♖c5

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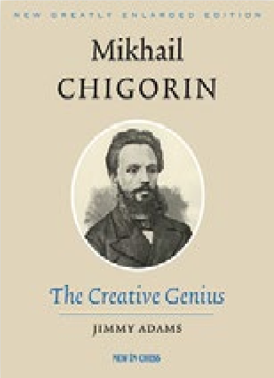
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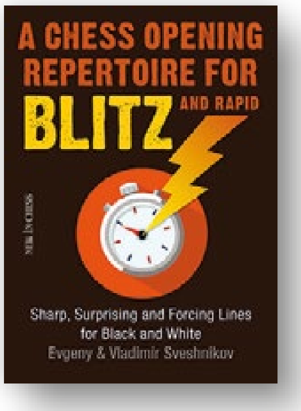
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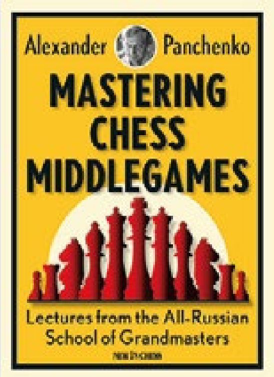
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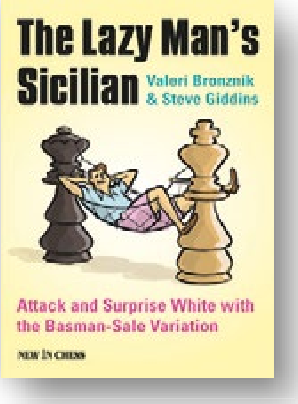
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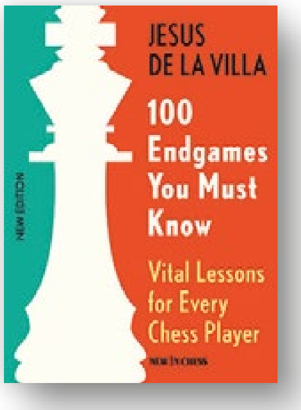
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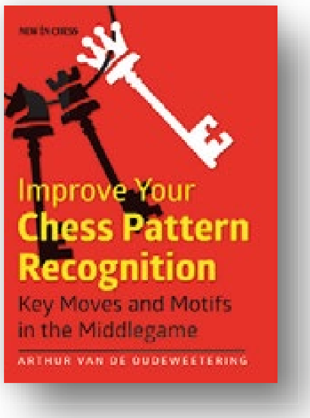
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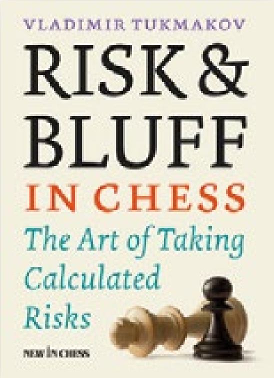
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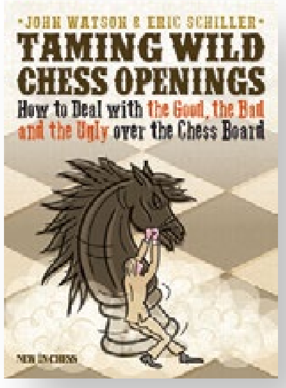
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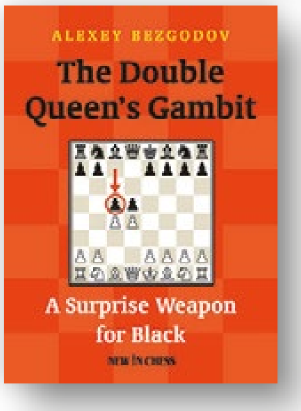
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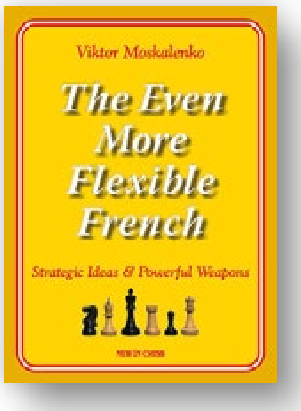
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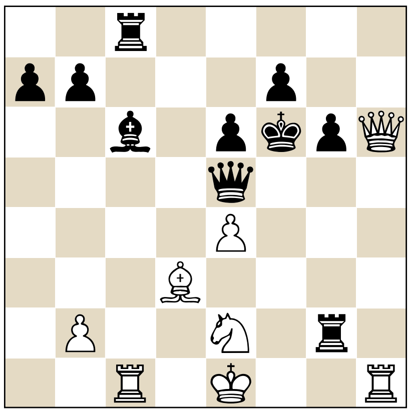
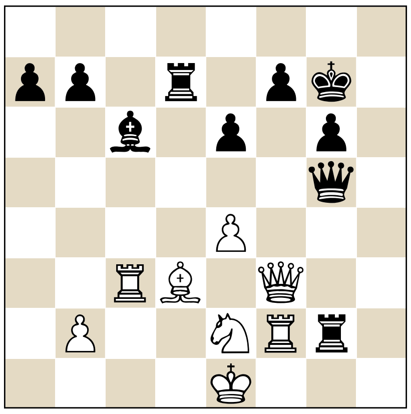
will end in disaster. **26.♘e2 ♖xg4 27.e4 ♖xg2** Again too speculative. He should have gone for the queen swap with 27...♕g5, when after 28.♕xg5 ♖xg5 29.♔f2 ♖d8 30.♖cd1 f5 Black should not lose. **28.♕h6+ ♔f6**



29.♖c3? With hardly any time left and mainly relying on the 30-second increment per move, Van Wely misses a golden opportunity. After 29.♕h4+ g5 (both 29...♕g5 30.e5+ ♔g7 31.♕h7+ and 29...♔g7 30.♕h7+ ♔f6 31.♖f1+ ♔e7 32.♕xf7+ should be avoided) 30.♕h3 the black rook is trapped and Carlsen would have to try 30...♖xe2+ 31.♗xe2, and even with White's time-trouble this position should be lost for Black. **29...♖d8 30.♕h3** After 30.♕h4+ the endgame should be fine for Black after 30...♕g5. **30...♕g5 31.♖f1+ ♔g7 32.♕f3 ♖d7 33.♖f2**



By now Van Wely was playing on increments only. The position is too complicated for that. **33...♖g4 34.♘f4 ♕h4** Especially if there are pins all over the place. **35.♗e2 ♖g1+ 36.♗f1 ♔g8 (!)**

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TATA STEEL CHESS 2016
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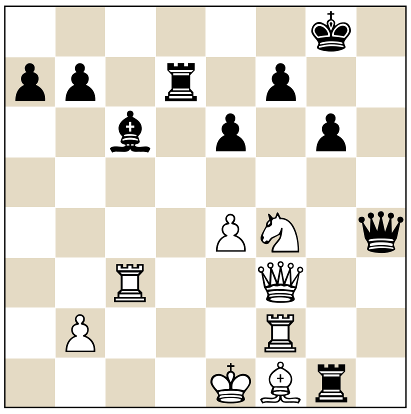
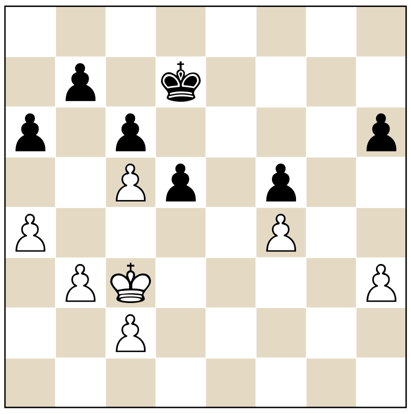
ALINA L'AMI

In the traditional football match 'Team Van Wely' beat 'Team Carlsen', but on the chess board the Dutch GM inspired the World Champion to score a hattrick.



How cruel. A quiet move when you have no time left. Probably this is even more devastating than the objectively better 36...e5 indicated by the engines. **37.♘e2?** He could have maintained some hope with 37.♘g2, but now it's all over. **37...♖xf1+ 38.♔xf1 ♖d1+ 39.♔g2 ♗xe4** White resigned.

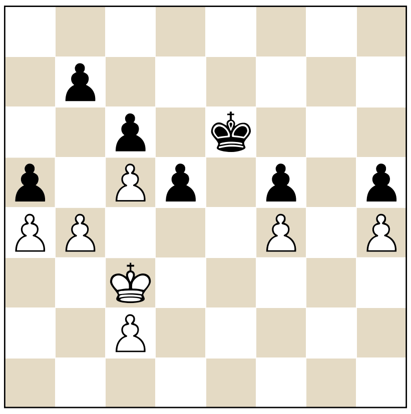
This win seemed to have a liberating effect on Carlsen. In his next two games he was 'having fun', as he described it himself, and scored two fine wins. The Norwegian essentially decided the tournament in his next two white games. In Round 9, he once again demonstrated what an endgame virtuoso he is in his game against Mickey Adams (don't miss Carlsen's comments, which provide a wonderful peek into his way of thinking). In Round 11, too, he showed the importance of endgame knowledge, although this time it was an instructive endgame error by Hou Yifan that decided the issue.



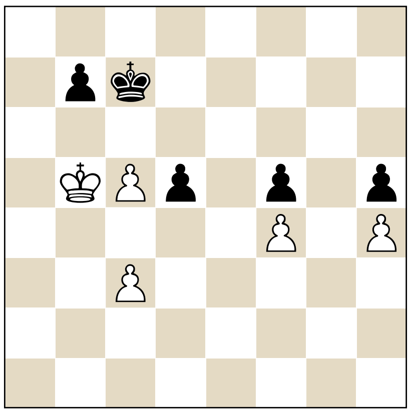
Carlsen-Hou Yifan
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (11)
position after 45.♔xc3

Hou Yifan has defended well and a draw is within reach. But pawn endings are tricky. **45...h5?** And this move loses the game, as it allows the white king to penetrate on the queenside. As Carlsen indicated when he left the playing hall, Black could have reached a blockade and a draw with

45...a5! 46.♔d4 ♔e6 47.h4 h5 48.♔c3 ♔d7 49.b4 ♔e6!.



The point. The extra pawn means nothing and Black's king successfully keeps its white counterpart at bay. For example, 50.bxa5 ♔d7 51.♔d4 ♔e6 52.c4 dxc4 53.♔xc4 ♔d7 54.♔b4 (of course 54.♔d4 won't yield anything after 54...♔e6) 54...♔c8 55.a6 bxa6 56.♔a5 ♔b7, and Black holds easily. **46.♔b4** Now the white king will inevitably tear down the black defences. **46...♔c8 47.♔a5 ♔c7 48.h4 ♔b8 49.♔b6 ♔c8 50.b4 ♔b8 51.b5 cxb5 52.axb5 axb5 53.♔xb5 ♔c7 54.c3**



Black resigned. She cannot both defend the b-pawn and prevent c6, ...bxc6, ♔xc6 and the loss of the d-pawn.

Hou Yifan was one of the three Chinese grandmasters that played in the Masters. A heavy delegation, certainly in light of the current friction between steel makers in Europe and China. Both at the opening and the closing ceremonies, Theo Henrar, Managing Director of Tata Steel IJmuiden, condemned the 'steel dumping' by Chinese manufacturers and called on Dutch and European politicians for protective measures against these unacceptable practices.

For Hou Yifan, Tata Steel was an excellent test for her World Championship match against current champion Mariya Muzychuk in Lviv in March. Hou Yifan started well, and after six rounds she had a positive score, but then a rough weekend with two losses against Mamedyarov and Van Wely shook her confidence. Coincidentally, this was exactly the weekend that Judit Polgar visited Wijk aan Zee. They had a friendly chat before the game and posed for photographs, keeping speculation alive that one day they may play a match. How realistic these hopes are is unclear, as Polgar keeps stressing that she has quit and is not contemplating a comeback. But she did follow Hou Yifan's games with special interest. 'I am no longer playing and don't feel stress anymore. But watching her game I do feel this nervous feeling in my stomach again.'

'The only champion that is still ahead of Magnus Carlsen is Garry Kasparov, with 40 super-tournament victories.'

Ding Liren had the best Chinese result, confirming that for the moment he remains China's number one. He won four games and finished in shared second place with Caruana, one point behind Carlsen. Wei Yi finished in seventh place with a 50 per cent score. The debut of the winner of last year's Challengers was eagerly awaited, but the 16-year-old prodigy seems to need some time to adjust among the Masters. His win against David Navara was impressive, but then, as Wei Yi laconically points out in his comments, it was also the only game he won.

With his win over Hou Yifan, Carlsen took a commanding lead with only two rounds to go. Caruana had a full point less, Ding Liren was trailing at one and a half points. But the fight remained open when, in the penultimate round, Carlsen drew against Wesley So, while Caruana and Ding Liren beat Van Wely and Pavel Eljanov, respectively.

The last round lasted a long time, but didn't change anything. Ding Liren calmly defended a rook and bishop vs. rook ending against Carlsen (who had the extra bishop) and made a draw after 99 moves. In the meantime, Caruana had ended up in a dubious position against Tomashevsky and resigned after 61 moves.

Carlsen's fifth win in Wijk aan Zee was impressive and fully deserved. The World Champion remained critical of his play, but said he was happy with the better parts of his games. Indeed, Carlsen didn't sweep the field, as he is capable of doing when in top form, but there can be no question that he remains in a class of his own if he convincingly wins a super-tournament like Wijk aan Zee while not fully fighting fit.

It is not entirely clear what constitutes a super-tournament, but the statisticians that claim that this was Carlsen's 26th super-tournament victory offer important objective data, especially as they apply the same criteria to other players and point out that the Norwegian has left fabulous tournament players like Anand and Kramnik behind him – and that the only champion that is still ahead of him is Garry Kasparov, with 40 such victories.

NOTES BY

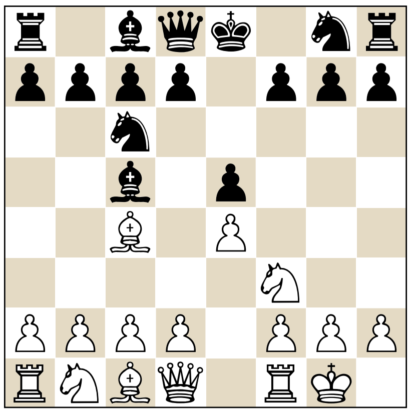
Magnus Carlsen

IG 2.11 – C54
Magnus Carlsen
Michael Adams
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (9)

1.e4 The first time I've ever tried 1.e4 against Mickey in classical chess.

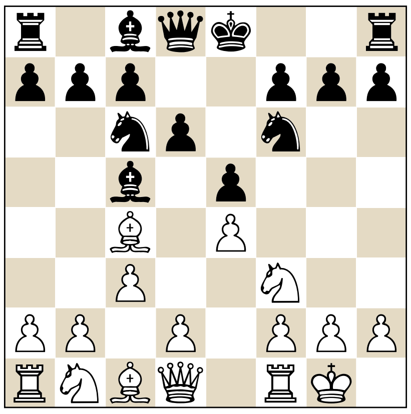
1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4
But alas, the free day before the game was not spent refuting his Ruy/Berlin repertoire.

3...♗c5 4.0-0



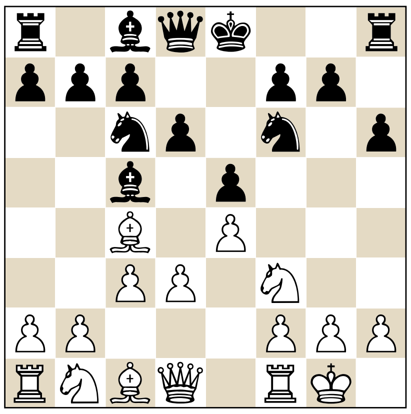
4...d6 Avoiding the Max Power (Max Lange) Attack after 4...♘f6 5.d4.

5.c3 ♘f6



6.d3 I remembered that Saric got an advantage with 6.d4 ♗b6 7.dxe5 against Aronian in last year's Tata, but I assumed Mickey had that covered.

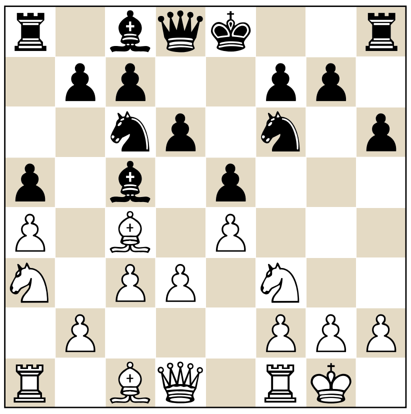
6...h6 Avoiding ♗g5. Against the Italian such liberties can often be taken. Besides, he stays flexible on the queenside, deciding whether to play ...a6 or ...a5 only after I've shown some of my cards.



7.a4
I spent more than 25 minutes on this and the next move, time that I would later curse myself for having wasted. Part of the time was spent pondering whether the extra h6-move could somehow be used to my advantage after 7.d4 ♗b6 (I cannot imagine why I thought it could). But mostly I was trying to figure out how to favourably expand on the queenside.
One of the lines I considered was 7.b4 ♗b6 8.♘bd2, since if I get time for ♗b3 and ♘c4, I will have a little something something. However, 8...♘e7 looked fine to me, as Black will be in time to meet ♘c4 with ...♗c7.
7.♘bd2 a6 also gives Black a normal Italian (7...♘e7 8.d4 is probably an achievement for White).

7...a5 Probably the right decision. If 7...a6 (one of the two obviously had to played to avoid me trapping his bishop), then I would follow the same plan, with a little more space than in the game.

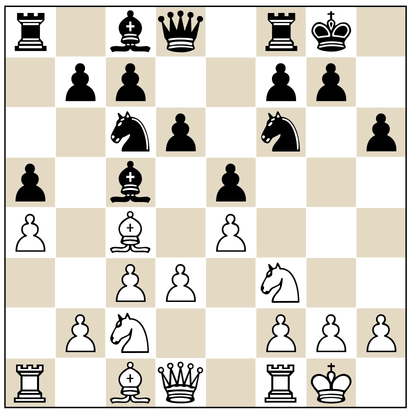
8.♘a3



Once again I spent time considering d4, but in the end I decided to just play normally.

8...0-0 I actually thought he might consider to just chop off my knight, as my rook would be temporarily misplaced, and I was not sure my dark-squared bishop would have a very bright future. The bishop pair will soon be gone after ...♗e6.

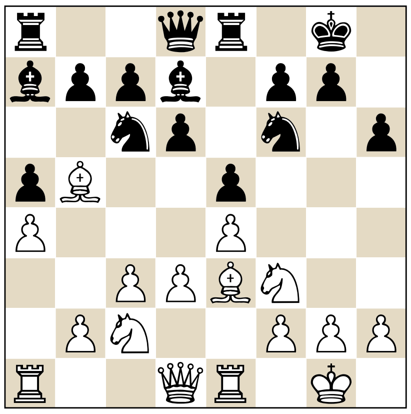
9.♘c2



9...♖e8 I was quite happy to see this move, as I would be able to pin his rook with ♗b5 after ...♗e6.
9...♗e6 10.♗xe6 fxe6 was also quite possible, but White might claim a slight advantage after 11.♗e3 ♗xe3 12.♘xe3, probably without justification.

10.♖e1 As he cannot go ...♗e6 ♗xe6 ...♖xe6 due to d4-d5, it makes sense to make a waiting move before going ♗e3.

10...♗a7 11.♗e3 ♗e6 12.♗b5 ♗d7 Now I felt that I just needed to make another waiting move to force a slight concession.

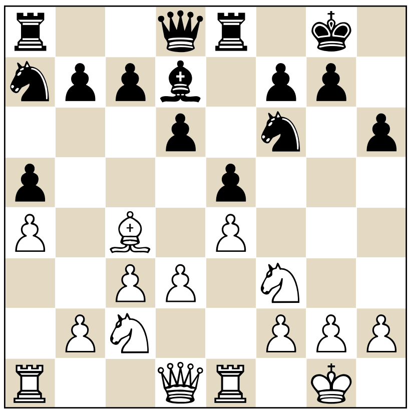


13.♗xa7
After a frustrating 30-minute think I failed to find anything better.
The move that suggests itself is 13.h3, but I did not want to weaken f4: 13...♘e7 14.♗xa7 ♖xa7 15.d4 ♘g6. It seemed to me that I would not be able

to exploit the undefended position of his rook on a7 after dxe5, and otherwise Black was solid and might find some counterplay with ...♘f4 later.

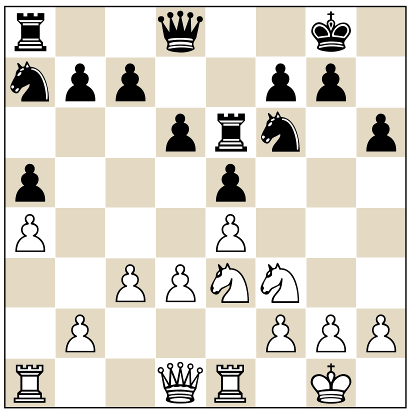
Other, more sophisticated means that I considered in the fight for a tempo were 13.♖c1, 13.g3, 13.♘d2, 13.♕d2 and 13.♕e2, but none of them came close to convincing me.

13...♘xa7 14.♗c4



14...♗e6 Very logical. He could also have gone ...♘c8 immediately, but then I might go hide the bishop: 14...♘c8 15.♘e3 ♘b6 16.♗b3 ♗e6 17.♗c2, with d4 coming, although it is clearly not much.

15.♗xe6 ♖xe6 16.♘e3



16...♘c8 The best route for the knight. 16...♘c6 17.♕b3, with ♘d5 looming, is a bit uncomfortable.

17.♘f5

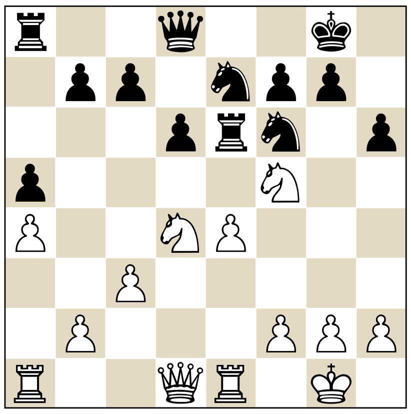
The white pieces are slightly better placed, but with such a symmetrical structure my slight advantage will eventually disappear. This is why I took the chance to force matters a little.

17...♘e7 18.d4

The idea of my previous move.

18.♘3h4 is pointless, as without the dark-squared bishops I cannot make use of the knight on f5.

18...exd4 19.♘3xd4



19...♖e5?

A mistake, although neither of us really understood this during the game.

At first I thought that 19...♖xe4 20.♖xe4 ♘xe4 21.♕g4 was quite promising for White, as I somehow

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only considered 21...♘xf5 here. But there is 21...♘g5!.

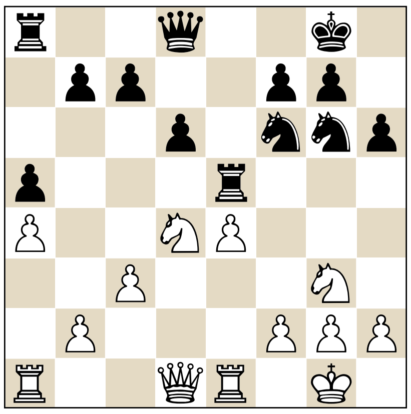
I discovered that this was possible only after I played 17.♘f5 (21...♘xf5 22.♘xf5 ♘g5 23.♖e1! is what I liked for White; h4 is now a serious threat, and after 23...♕f6 24.♘e7+ ♔h8 25.♘d5 ♕d8 26.♕f5! ♕c8 27.♕xc8+ ♖xc8 28.♖e7 White's initiative persists without queens) 22.♖e1 (22.h4 ♘xf5 23.♘xf5 ♘e6 24.♘xh6+ ♔f8 25.♘f5 ♕f6 is objectively the best, with equality) 22...♘g6! 23.h4 ♘h7, and there is nothing concrete while Black remains a pawn up.

20.♘g3 ♘g6

It's easy to understand why Mickey did not feel the need to play concretely. Black seems very solid, while my space advantage (e4 vs d6) does not feel very significant, with two pairs of minor pieces exchanged. Besides, it appears that the space advantage could disappear at any moment after a timely ...d6-d5. His last move is quite necessary to avoid f4, as rolling with a Lasker rook on c5 understandably seemed a bit too funky.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Magnus Carlsen didn't sweep the field, but there can be no question that he remains in a class of his own if he convincingly wins a super-tournament like Wijk aan Zee while not fully fighting fit.



21.♕c2

I spent seven minutes on this move, partly hesitating between going c4 immediately and bringing my rook into play first, and partly cursing myself for having wasted so much time earlier in the game and now wasting more precious time (I had about 30 minutes left before this move) on a decision that did not seem particularly significant.

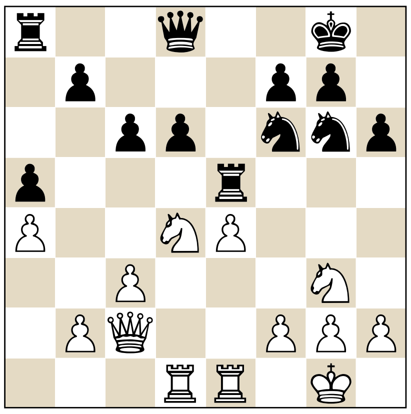
I finally decided against 21.c4 because of 21...c6, followed by ...♕b6, even after 22.♘df5 ♕b6, and ...♖d8 following after either capture.

21...c6

Not a great move, but very logical. Engines start suggesting moves like ...♕b8-a7, which is not very intuitive when White has a square on b5.

22.♖ad1

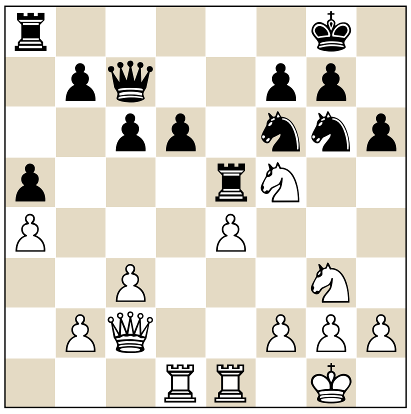
Now I was very surprised and happy to discover that I was actually better! It's hard to play ...d5 under favourable circumstances and my plan in the game was surprisingly powerful.



22...♕c7

22...d5 does not quite work: 23.♘f3 ♖e8 24.exd5 ♖xe1+ 25.♘xe1 cxd5 (25...♘xd5 26.c4) 26.♘f3. This is comfortably better for White. Normally it would not be much, but the inclusion of a4 a5 helps me enormously, as there will be a square on b5 and additional targets.

23.♘df5



23...♖d8

23...d5 24.exd5 ♘xd5 (24...cxd5 is better, but again by no means equal) 25.♘h5 is not difficult to see, but it was somehow aesthetically pleasing during the game. g7 cannot be defended: 25...♖ae8 26.♖f1 (26.♖xe5 ♕xe5 27.♕b1! – 27.g3 ♕e2 – is also possible) 26...♖e2 27.♕b1, and Black's temporary activity is extinguished, while g7 falls.

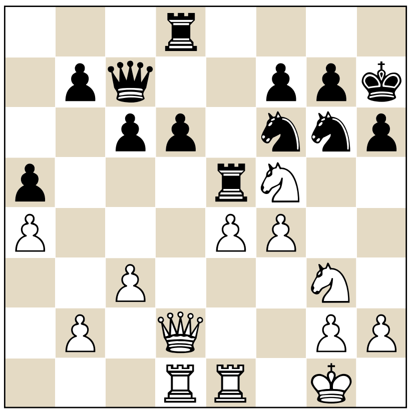
24.♕d2 Going c4 was also possible, with a nice grip on the position, but I was excited about the prospect of both attacking d6 and threatening f4 with the same move.

24...♔h7

Played after 18 minutes of thinking, a sure sign that he realized that his position was getting really unpleasant.

24...♕b6 25.♔h1 (25.♘xd6 ♖e6 is far too hasty) does not seem to change much.

25.f4



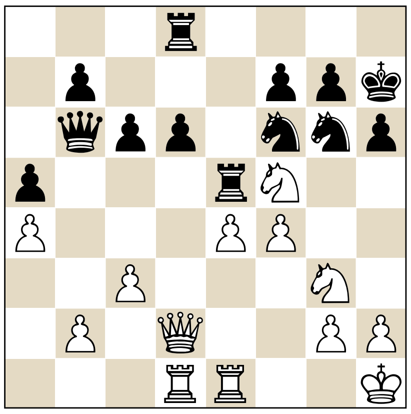
25...♕b6+

Normally one would like to save such a check for later, but here it is absolutely forced.

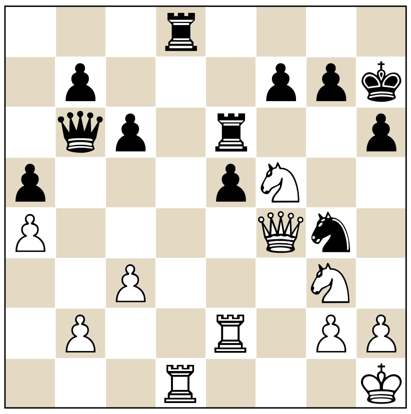
After 25...♖ee8 26.♘xd6 ♕b6+ 27.♕f2 I can safely block the check, since the rook on e8 is hanging.

26.♔h1

After 26.♕f2 the pawn on f4 simply disappears: 26...♕xf2+ 27.♔xf2 ♘xf4.



26...♖ee8 Instead, 26...♖e6 27.e5 is absolutely terrible for Black, as long as I avoid a nasty little trick: 27...♘g4 28.♖f1!. I was going to play this on general grounds, as one should not take the rook off the last rank for no reason! But 28.♖e2?? ♘xf4! 29.♕xf4 dxe5 would be a big mistake.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

This is the point. Because of the last-rank weakness the tables have been turned.

27.h3 By far the best move, but again I invested a large part of the time I had left.

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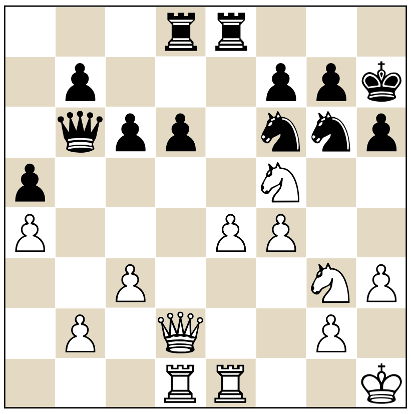
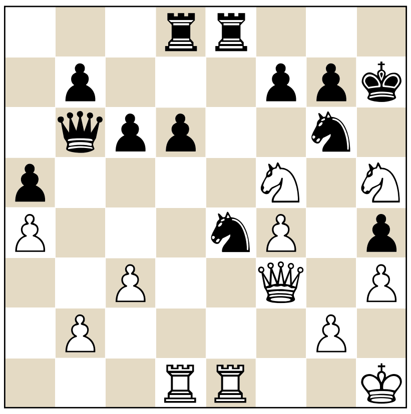
After 27.♘xd6 ♘g4 28.♖f1 ♖xd6 (28...♘e3 29.♕f2!) 29.♕xd6 ♘f2+ 30.♖xf2 ♕xf2, I am only temporarily a pawn up, as both f4 and b2 are hanging.



27...♖d7

This came as a major surprise. Black cannot defend d6, as both ...d5 and ...♖e6 run into e5, but although maybe not objectively better, 27...h5 is what I spent all my time calculating before I played h3 and would have been a very interesting try. I investigated several options: 28.♕e2!. This surprising move is the one I liked best during the game: 28...h4 (28...♘xf4 – normally one would stop calculating here, but since my queen is no longer pinned on the d-file, 29.♕f3, followed by 30.♘xd6, is very strong now) 29.♘h5 ♘xe4 30.♕f3!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I saw this idea, but I was still apprehensive, as I could not really believe that it would work. But it does!: 30...♘f2+ (30...♕c5 is a much better defence, but it does not solve his problems: 31.♘hxg7 ♘g3+ 32.♘xg3 ♖xe1+ 33.♖xe1 hxg3 34.♘h5 ♕f2 35.♕xg3 ♕xg3 36.♘xg3, and since 36...♘xf4 is met by 37.♖f1, White has good winning chances) 31.♔h2 ♘xd1 32.♘f6+! gxf6 33.♕h5+ ♔g8 34.♕h6, and mates.

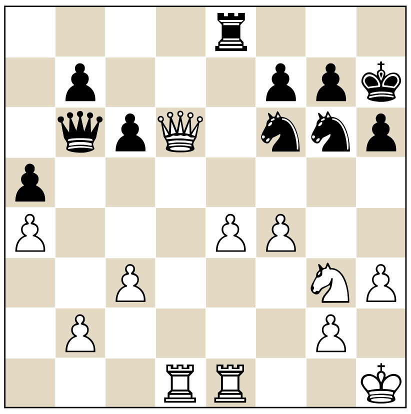
28.♕c2 or 28.♕d3 were other moves that I briefly touched on, with the idea of answering 28...h4 with 29.♘xh4 ♘xh4 30.e5+. But if he simply defends the pawn with 31...♕c7 or 31...♕c5, I was not convinced about my advantage.

28.♘xd6 is simplest. After the forced 28...h4 29.♘gf5 ♘xe4 I saw 30.♘xe4! ♖xe4! (30...♖xd2 31.♘g5 mates: 31...♔g8 32.♖xe8+ ♘f8 33.♘e7+ ♔h8 34.♖xf8 mate), but I could not evaluate 31.♖xe4 ♖xd2 32.♖xd2 properly. With more time I would surely have realized that all the entry points for his queen are covered and my threat of ♘d6 is very strong, but with little time and a possibly unsafe king, I'm always a bit wary of playing against the queen.

28.♘xd6 ♖xd6

The only chance. 28...♖ed8 29.e5 ♘e8 30.♘gf5 is just a pawn.

29.♕xd6

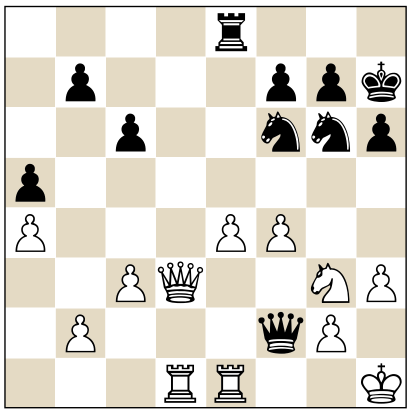


29...♕f2

Since all my attention had been focused on 27...h5, I realized only now that I was still a long way away from a win.

Even 29...♕xb2 is not so bad: 30.f5 (30.♕d2 ♕xd2 31.♖xd2 ♘xf4 32.e5 ♘6d5 does not look too convincing) 30...♘e5 31.♕d2 ♕a3 32.♖a1 ♕e7, and while I suspect White should be technically winning, Black has a solid blockade for the moment. And with eight moves still to go till move 40 one never knows.

30.♕d3

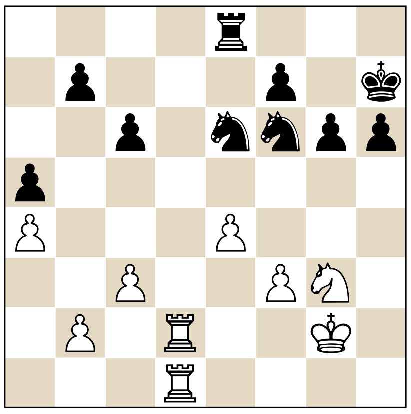


There is nothing better than to return a couple of pawns. Additionally, after blundering both mate on g2 and the knight on g3 in different lines, getting the queens off seemed like a very wise idea.

30...♘xf4 31.♕f3 ♘xh3 32.♖e2

32.♖f1 was also possible, but I liked the idea of doubling rooks on the d-file.

32...♕xf3 33.gxf3 ♘g5 34.♔g2 ♘e6 35.♖ed2 g6



He has managed to set up a solid defence for the moment, but the following knight manoeuvre is surprisingly strong.

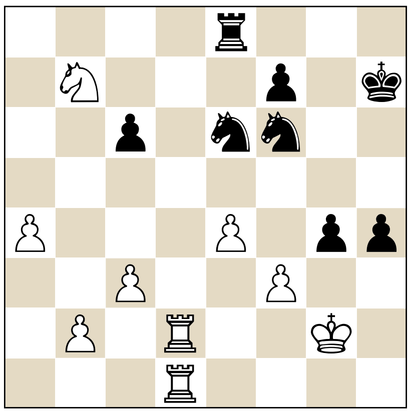
He should perhaps have tried 35...g5 immediately, as ♘f5 and ♘d6 can be met by ...♖e7. Practically speaking, Black certainly has drawing chances.

36.♘f1 h5

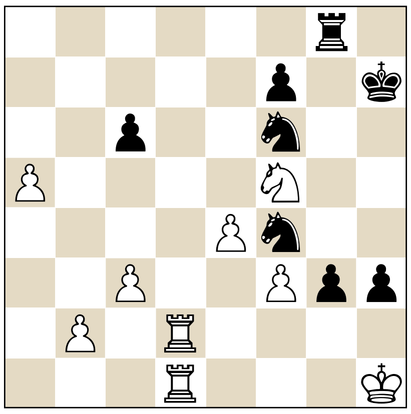
Since there is no good way to meet ♘e3-c4 anyway, Mickey has to go for it after all.

37.♘e3 h4 38.♘c4 g5 39.♘xa5 g4 40.♘xb7

I decided to be really greedy, as it seemed to me that his h3-g3 pair would not really be dangerous.



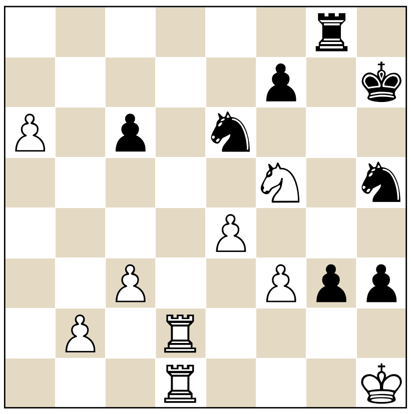
40...g3 41.♘d6 ♖g8 42.♘f5 ♘f4+ 43.♔h1 h3 44.a5



So far so good. I have a lot of extra material, and he has no threats. Additionally, my a-pawn is running very fast.

44...♘6h5 45.a6 ♘e6

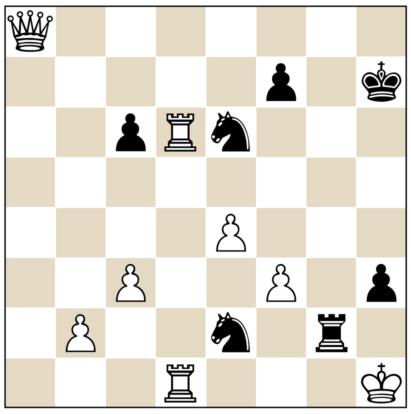
Now, however, I sank into thought and began seeing all kinds of ghosts.



> ‘Once you find one line in which you are suddenly mated, you start looking for other options.’

46.a7

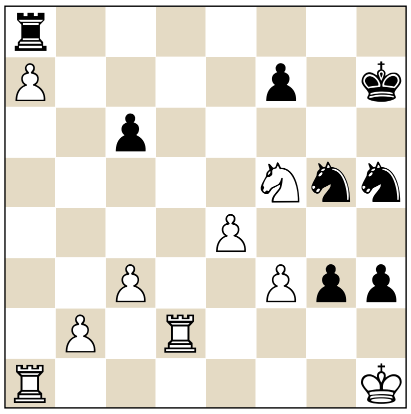
My original intention had been 46.♖d6, preventing ...♘g5, and game over, I thought. But then I saw 46...♘hf4, with the idea of ♘e2, and it spooked me a lot more than it should have: 47.♘xg3 ♖xg3 48.a7 (48.♖g1 ♘g2 49.a7 ♖g8 50.♖xc6 is still completely winning, which I more or less realied during the game. But some doubts still remained: what did I give up my knight for!?) and game over, one would think? Sure, 48...♖g8 49.♖d8 is easy enough. But then you start seeing lines like 48...♘e2! 49.a8♕?? ♖g2.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And once you find one line in which you are suddenly mated, you start looking for other options.

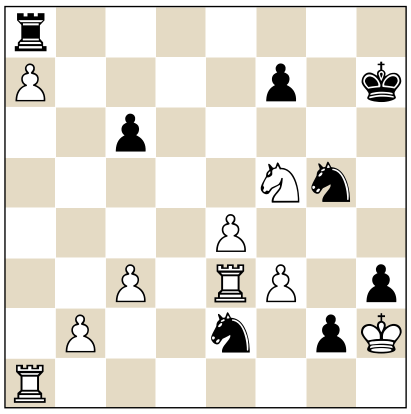
46...♖a8 47.♖a1 ♘g5



48.♘h4

So this is the idea that I settled on. I have to remove the knight from its best post on f5, but I could still not see any ideas for Black.

48.♖d3 ♘f4 49.♖e3 would have been a very clean solution, were it not for 49...g2+ (49...♘g2 was what I feared, but this is very easily solved by 50.♖e2 ♘f4 51.♘xg3, and the rook is protected) 50.♔h2 ♘e2!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I naturally did not see this. 51.♖xe2 ♘xf3+ 52.♔g3 (52.♔xh3 g1♕ 53.♖xg1 ♘xg1+, and I lose both rooks) 52...♖xa7 53.♖b1 g1♕+ 54.♖xg1 ♘xg1, and he has suddenly

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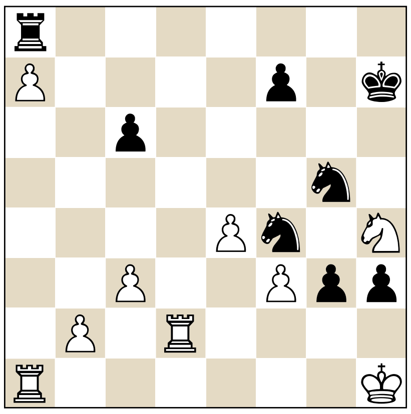
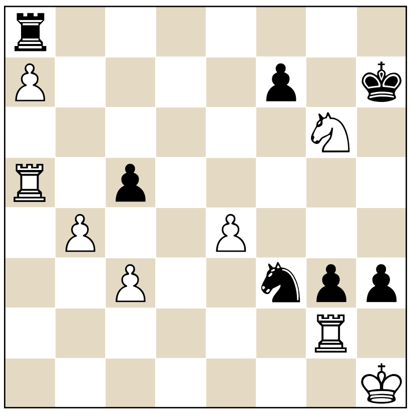
regained all his material, even though he would still have a problem, as his knight is rather stuck on g1.

48...♘f4



49.b4? Panic, confusion... I just decided to get rid of the pawns once and for all. 49.♖a5 would still have been a clean win, as Mickey pointed out to me after the game. I rejected it because of 49...c5, but now 50.b4, which I somehow failed to consider, works much better: 50...♘g6 (50...g2+ 51.♘xg2 hxg2+ 52.♖xg2 ♘xg2 53.♔xg2 cxb4 54.cxb4, and with the c6-pawn gone, the pawns are unstoppable) 51.♘xg6 ♘xf3 52.♖g2.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And this works even here.

49...g2+

Because of ♔h2/g1 ♘g6, I am forced to give up a full rook.

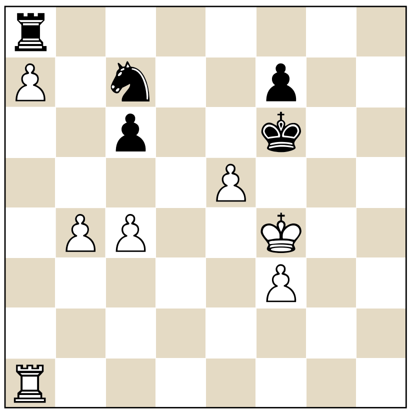
50.♘xg2 hxg2+ 51.♖xg2 ♘xg2 52.♔xg2 ♘e6 53.c4 ♘c7

And the pawns are reasonably well blockaded. It still felt like I should be winning, as his pieces are very passive and my king and f/e-pair will manage to create something before his king can get to the queenside.

54.♔g3 ♔g6 55.♔f4 ♔f6 56.e5+

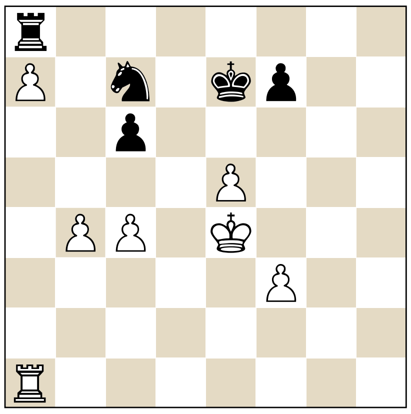
NEW IN CHESS

Magnus Carlsen makes a move against Euwe biographer Alexander Münninghoff in a simul in the Dutch Parliament two days after he won the Tata Steel Masters. The World Champion lost one game, against tournament director Jeroen van den Berg.



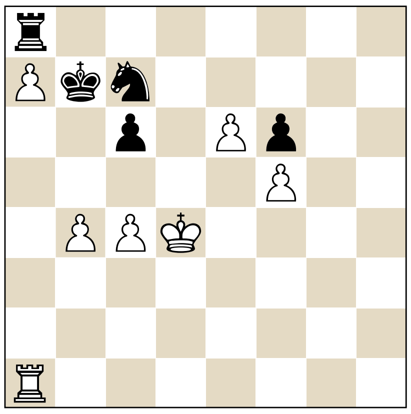
56...♔e7 56...♔e6 57.♔e4 f6 would have been very logical, seemingly exchanging the e5-pawn without letting my king take up a dominating position on e5. But I had seen in advance that it would fail to 58.♔d4, and since he does not have the e6-square for the knight, my king decisively penetrates on the queenside.

57.♔e4



57...f6

Quite logical, but not the best try. After 57...♔d7 58.f4 ♔c8 59.f5 ♔b7 60.e6 (with the idea of 60...fxe6 61.f6) 60...f6 61.♔d4

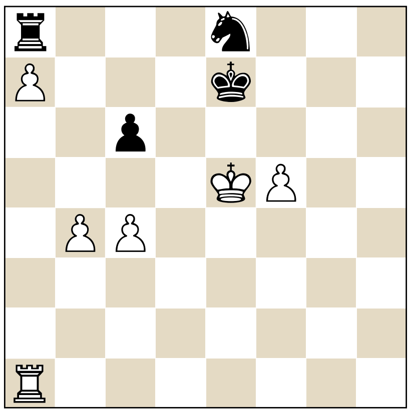


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

61...♘a6 62.♖xa6 still seemed to win. But I had missed 61...♔b6, stopping ♔c5 and making a draw.

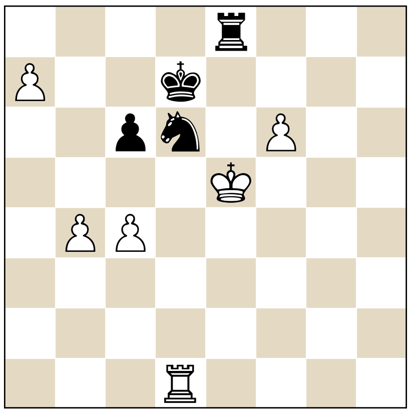
My father told me after the game that a Norwegian super-computer gave me +4 even after 57...♔d7, so I guess I was still winning. Am I going to find out how, or shall I stick to the old cliché that this would have given better chances for a draw, but should still lose? The latter obviously. Deal with it.

58.f4 fxe5 59.♔xe5 ♘e8 60.f5



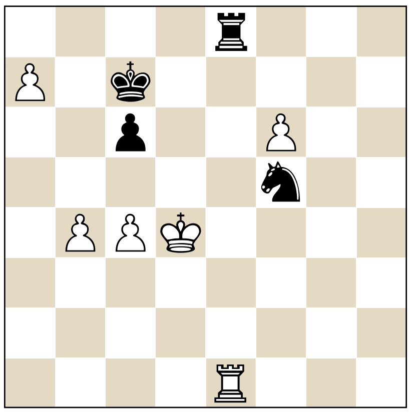
60...♘d6 Now I'm winning by force. After 60...♘f6 the win, while attainable, is still not quite easy.

61.f6+ ♔d7 62.♖d1 ♖e8+



63.♔d4 The point. While breaking the pin does not look logical, I am threatening ♔c5, and after the forced **63...♔c7 64.♖e1** White wins a crucial tempo.

64...♘f5+ As Peter (Heine Nielsen) and I agreed after the game, resigning instead of trying this would have been unprofessional.



65.♔c3

Fortunately I had a lot of time... and didn't fall for 65.♔c5 ♖xe1 66.a8♕ ♖e5 mate.

65...♖a8 66.f7

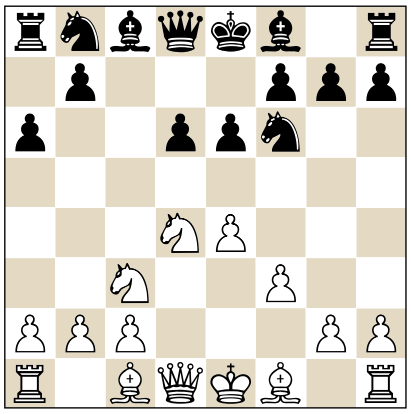
Black resigned.

NOTES BY

Fabiano Caruana

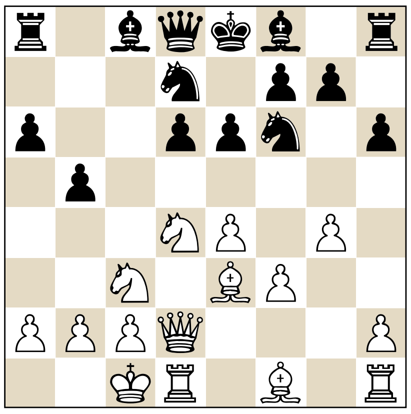
SI 19.16 – B80
Fabiano Caruana
Loek van Wely
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (12)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.f3 e6



Loek goes for the sharpest possible line in the Sicilian. Not really what I had expected, but he was probably inspired by my abysmal score in the Najdorf.

7.♗e3 b5 8.♕d2 ♘bd7 9.g4 h6 10.0-0-0

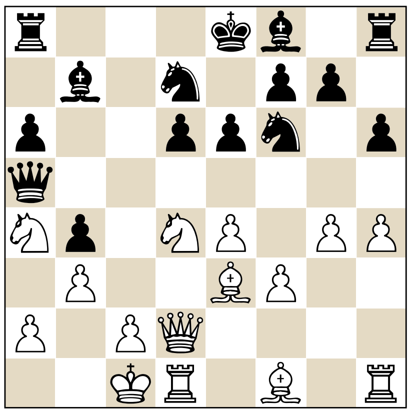


10...♗b7

The old, somewhat forgotten main line.

These days, everyone plays 10...b4 11.♘ce2 ♕c7 12.h4 d5, and now White has a million options, all leading to immense complications (and very often a computer-aided draw).

11.h4 b4 12.♘a4 ♕a5 13.b3

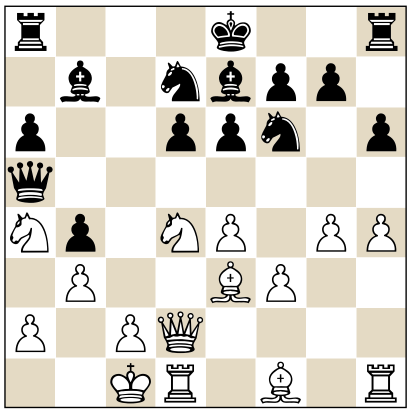


13...♗e7!?

This move was already new to me, although Loek had played it 16 years ago... against Garry Kasparov! I don't think he had prepared it for our game; he just decided to play it here.

I was trying to recall the theory after 13...♘c5 14.a3, and here we get a position comparable to the game: 14...♖c8 (14...♘xa4 15.axb4 ♕c7 16.bxa4 d5 17.e5 ♘d7 18.f4 is another huge line, with hundreds of games) 15.axb4 ♘xb3+ 16.♘xb3 ♕xa4 17.♔b2 d5. Now, if White plays 18.♗c5, as in the game, Black is perfectly fine after 18...dxe4 19.♗xf8 ♔xf8 20.♘c5 ♕c6 (18.c3 is the correct move, which the theory assesses as better for White) .

'This move was already new to me, although Loek had played it 16 years ago... against Garry Kasparov!'



14.♖h3!

I spent a lot of time here, and came up with an excellent move. I protect my rook, prepare g5, and get out of the way of possible tactics on the long diagonal.

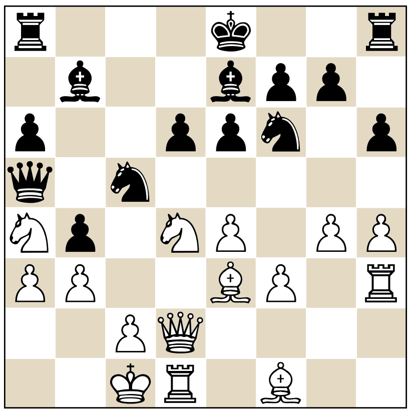
I didn't like the stereotypical 14.♗h3 in view of 14...g5!, freezing up White's kingside play. The machine insists that White is better after 15.a3 d5 16.hxg5 hxg5 17.e5 ♘xe5 18.♗xg5, but it seems unnecessarily complex to me.

14.♗e2 was my instinctive reaction, but then I realized that 14...g6!, followed by ...e5, leaves the knight comically trapped on d4.

14...♘c5

Necessary to prevent g5.

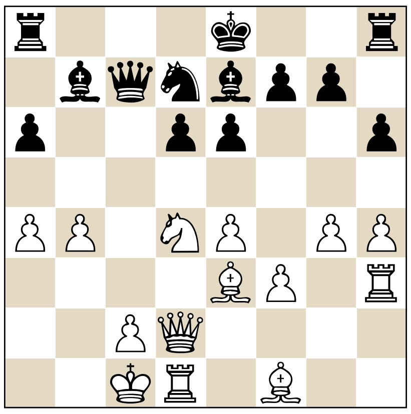
15.a3



15...♖c8

A very natural move, and the one I had expected, but surprisingly it seems to be a serious error.

15...♘xa4 16.axb4 ♕c7 17.bxa4 ♘d7 was probably the only way to achieve a playable position: 18.a5 ♘e5 19.♘b3, but Black is still struggling to find meaningful counterplay.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

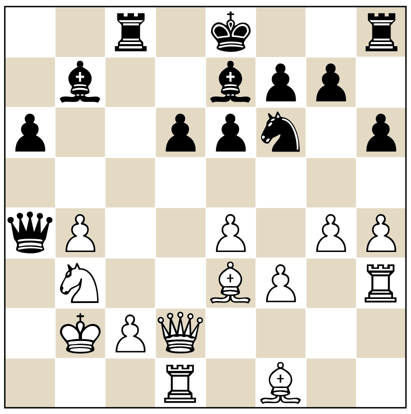
NEW IN CHESS

Fabiano Caruana, combining a Led Zeppelin T-shirt and a Saint Louis Chess Club jacket, impressed with fighting and creative play. His finish was unfortunate, but he will be a big, if not the biggest favourite in the Candidates'.

16.axb4

16.♕xb4?! ♕c7! is unclear, because ...d5 is in the air.

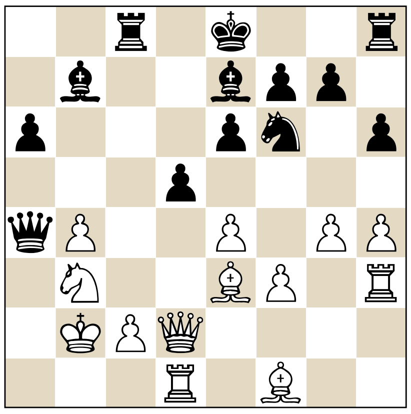
16...♘xb3+ 17.♘xb3 ♕xa4 18.♔b2



It seems logical that including ♖h3 and ♗e7 should favour Black, but the opposite is true.

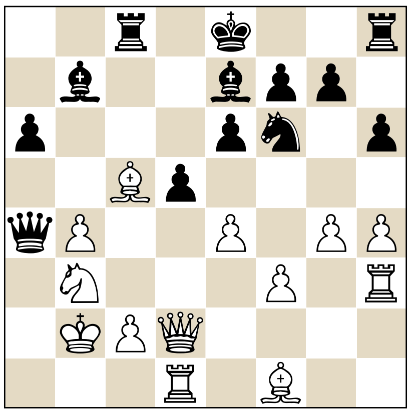
18...d5

18...♗xe4!? was Loek's suggestion after the game, but it doesn't work: 19.♖a1! ♕c6 20.fxe4 ♘xe4 21.♕d3 ♗f6+ 22.♗d4 ♘f2 23.♕d2 ♘xh3 24.♗xf6 gxf6 25.♗xh3, and White emerges with a decisive advantage.

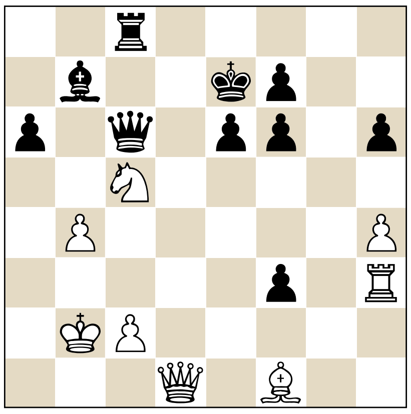


19.♗c5 A good move, after which it becomes clear that all is not well with Black's position. But there was an even stronger option.

The counter-intuitive 19.♖a1! was extremely strong: 19...♕c6 (19...♕xb4 20.c3 ♕d6 21.e5!, and the pawn is immune because the queen will get trapped on e5, so Black loses a piece) 20.c3 ♕c7 21.e5 ♘d7 22.f4, with a tremendous positional advantage.

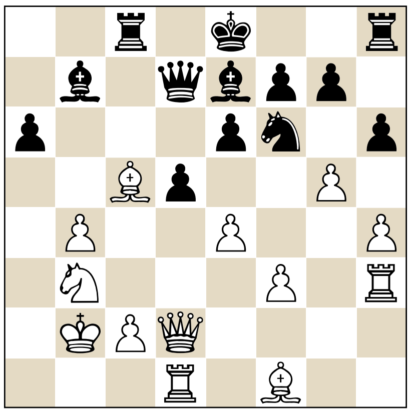


19...♕d7 I spent a lot of time calculating what would happen after 19...dxe4 20.♗xe7 ♔xe7 21.♘c5 ♕c6 (and not 21...♖xc5?? 22.♕d6+ ♔e8 23.♕d8 mate) 22.g5 (22.♘xb7 e3! 23.♕d6+ ♕xd6 24.♘xd6 ♖cd8 regains the piece with an unclear position) 22...♖hd8 (22...♘d5 23.fxe4 ♘xb4 24.♕d7+ wins a piece) 23.gxf6+ gxf6 24.♕e1 ♖xd1 25.♕xd1 exf3



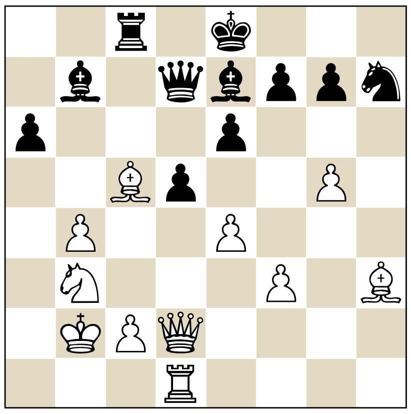
and although Loek seemed extremely sceptical about Black's position afterwards, this might have been a good practical chance.

20.g5 With hindsight, I think the less direct, more positional approach with 20.e5 ♘g8 21.f4, would have been crushing. Black has no counterplay and will find himself under attack after f5.



20...hxg5 I was expecting 20...♘h5 and had planned 21.f4 ♕c7 22.e5, with a tremendous advantage. Loek found a more resilient defence.

21.hxg5 ♖xh3 22.♗xh3 ♘h7

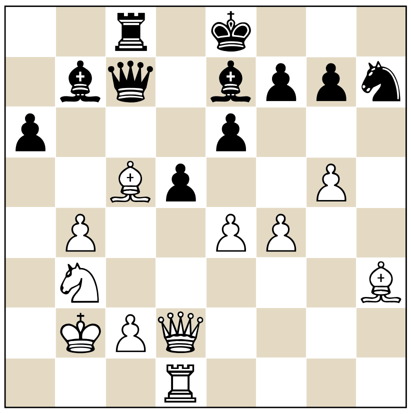


23.f4

A natural move, restricting the knight on h7, but the best option was to break up Black's kingside immediately.

23.g6! ♘g5 24.♗g4 was very strong, for example after 24...fxg6 25.exd5 ♗xd5 26.c4.

23...♕c7



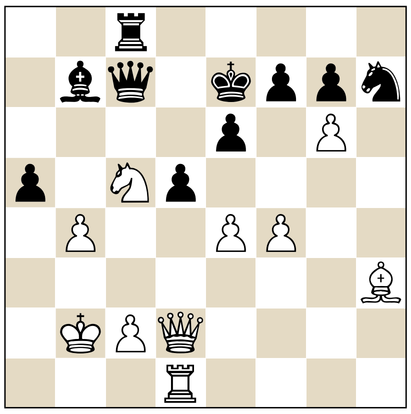
24.♗xe7?!

Again 24.g6 was best: 24...♘f6 25.gxf7+ ♔xf7, and this position didn't look entirely clear to me, but there are various ways to win, the most convincing being 26.♕e2!, with the point that 26...♘xe4 is met by 27.♕h5 and that 26...dxe4 loses to 27.♗xe6+! ♔xe6 28.♕c4+ ♗d5 29.♖xd5 ♘xd5 30.♘d4+ ♔f6 31.♕xd5.

24...♔xe7 25.♘c5 a5

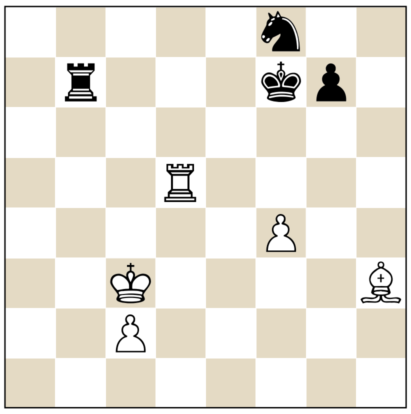
Now I began to realize that the position was spiralling out of control, and to make matters worse, we were both getting low on time.

26.g6



26...♘f6

Possibly better was 26...♘f8 27.gxf7 axb4 28.♘xb7, and here, what Loek had missed and what concerned me during the game was 28...♕c3+! 29.♕xc3 bxc3+ 30.♔a3 (30.♔c1 ♖a8) 30...♖a8+ 31.♔b4 ♖b8 32.♔xc3 ♖xb7 33.exd5 exd5 34.♖xd5 ♔xf7



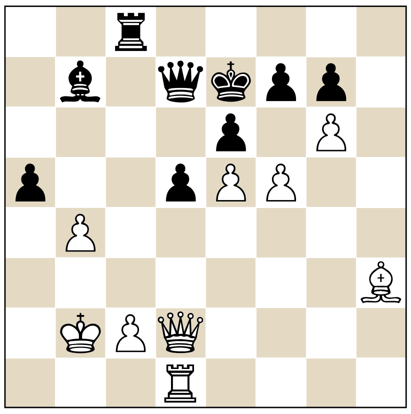
and White still has winning chances, but it will be far from easy.

27.e5 ♘d7

27...♘e4 28.♘xe4 dxe4 29.♕d6+ ♕xd6 30.exd6+ should win handily.

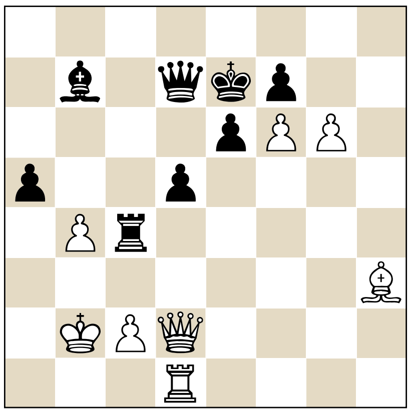
28.♘xd7 ♕xd7 29.f5

Now the situation looks grim for Black, because threats like f6+ and gxf7 are in the air.

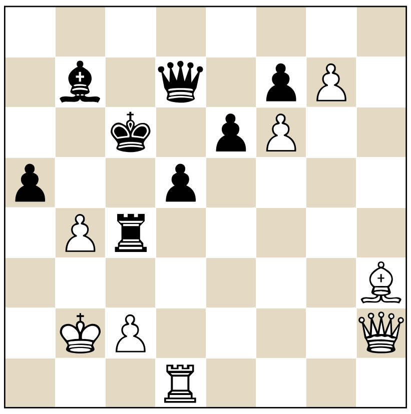


29...♖c4?

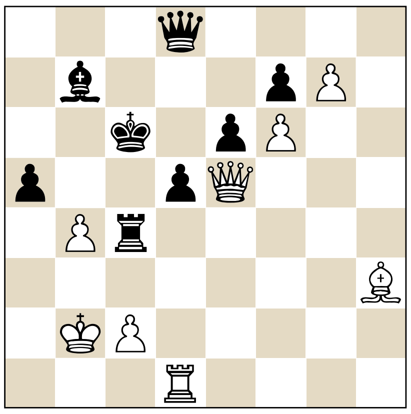
This loses, but it was hard to find the correct defence for Black.
We tried to make 29...♕a4 work after the game, but it isn't even close to adequate: 30.f6+ gxf6 31.exf6+ ♔d6, and now, among other moves, 32.♗xe6! ♔xe6 (32...fxe6 33.f7) 33.♖e1+ ♔d7 34.gxf7 wins.
29...♕c7! was the most persistent defence: 30.f6+ ♔f8! 31.fxg7+ ♔xg7 32.gxf7 ♔xf7, and surprisingly enough, checks lead nowhere, so White needs to play the quiet move 33.♔b1!, with an initiative, but Black has good chances to hold on.
30.f6+ Now it's all over.
30...gxf6 31.exf6+



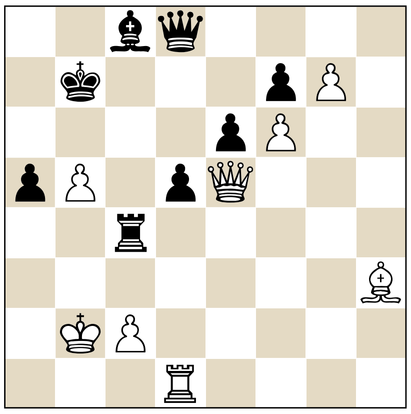
31...♔d6 31...♔xf6 32.♖f1+ is curtains. **32.♕h2+!**
This is the move Loek had missed when he played 29...♖c4.
32.g7 ♕a4! launches counterplay, and although it's still winning for White, Black may find swindles in the time-trouble phase.
32...♔c6 33.g7



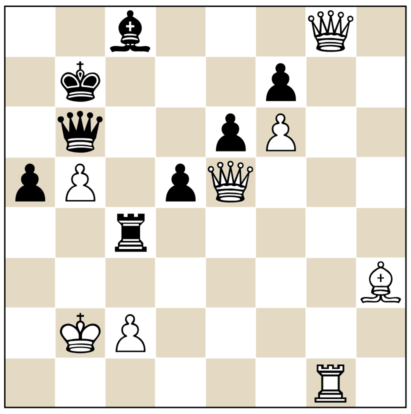
Now Black's queen can't join the attack.
33...♕d8 33...♖xb4+ 34.♔c1 won't change anything. **34.♕e5**



34...♗c8 I was expecting 34...♕b6 35.g8♕ ♖xb4+ 36.♔c1 ♖b1+ 37.♔d2 ♕f2+ 38.♕e2 ♕d4+ 39.♔e1, and was a bit worried about this position, but I didn't see any constructive checks for Black: 39...♕h4+ 40.♔f1 ♕xh3+ 41.♔g1 ♖xd1+ 42.♕xd1 ♕e3+ 43.♔g2 is indeed winning for White.
35.b5+ ♔b7



36.♖g1 36.♖xd5! exd5 37.♕e7+ ♕xe7 38.fxe7 was even stronger and more aesthetically pleasing.
36...♕b6 37.g8♕



37....♕xb5+ 38.♔c1 is the end of the checks, so Loek resigned.
After this win I moved to +4, with chances to play for 1st place going into the last round. A disappointing loss, however, put paid to my hopes.

Celeb 64

John Henderson

Ray Charles

With hits such as *Busted*, *Unchain My Heart*, *Hit the Road Jack* and *Georgia on My Mind*, the soul, blues and gospel legend Ray Charles became known as 'The Genius'. But with fame comes many vices, and while we see chess as being a form of addiction, for Charles it was the worst of addictions that led to his lifelong passion for chess.
He learned to play chess in 1965 whilst in a rehabilitation clinic for his heroin addiction. In his autobiography, *Brother Ray*, he tells how his doctor taught him to play to occupy his mind during bouts of insomnia. From that moment, he was hooked. He had his own custom-made wooden braille chess set and board that was to be his constant travelling companion; and both were often pictured together.
Charles loved that winning at chess was not a matter of luck, but skill: 'With cards, no matter how well you play, you ain't gonna win unless the cards fall for you. But in chess, it's my brain against yours! We start with the same pieces in the same places... You've got to outwit, out-think, and out-maneuver the other person, and he's thinking how to outwit you.'
When Charles died in 2004, his beloved wooden board and set – alongside his iconic Ray-Ban shades and Yamaha KX88 keyboard – went on display for a year at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; then going on from there to became a permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. ■

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

SL 1.6 – D11
Loek van Wely
Anish Giri
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (7)

Before the tournament, Uncle Loek, whom we all love, had proudly announced that his only goals were to A: Win his game against Anish Giri, and B: Score two points more than Anish Giri.

As it turned out, I didn't have my best tournament, not at all actually, but I did manage to scupper both these intentions.

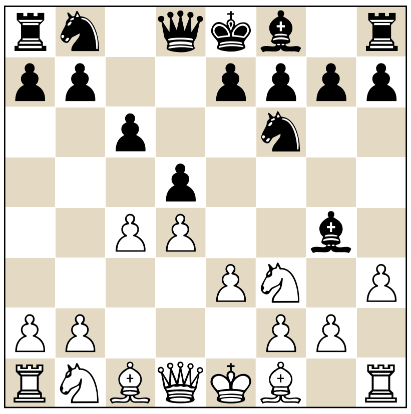
1.♘f3 The Trompowsky has served Loek very well in our games – in Wijk aan Zee, in blitz, and in general – but knowing Loek, the Trompowsky has probably taken a sabbatical itself this year.

1...d5 For some strange reason I play 1...d5 much more often against 1.♘f3 than against 1.d4 – must be something psychological. Jokes aside, for this game I decided to play something sound, not to start begging for a draw after 20 moves, like I did in Wijk aan Zee against Loek a couple of years back.

2.d4 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.e3

4.cxd5 once made me cry – literally – but that's a long story, which involved the ICC and Ivan Salgado Lopez, back in 2008. One can, however, always be sure that Captain Loek will never go for simplifications. Pride above all.

4...♗g4 5.h3

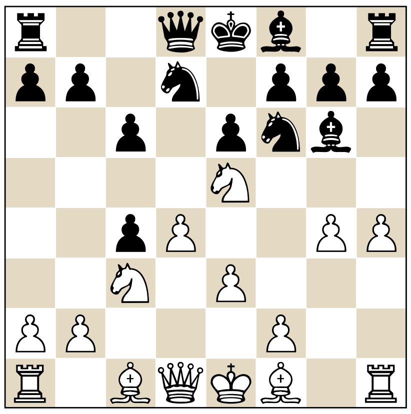


5...♗h5

Taking on f3 has always been considered a good move, but at some point people discovered that the bishop doesn't get trapped all that easily and now this has become the main move.

6.♘c3 e6 7.g4 ♗g6 8.♘e5 ♘bd7! 9.h4 dxc4!

This was the discovery that brought this variation back into fashion.



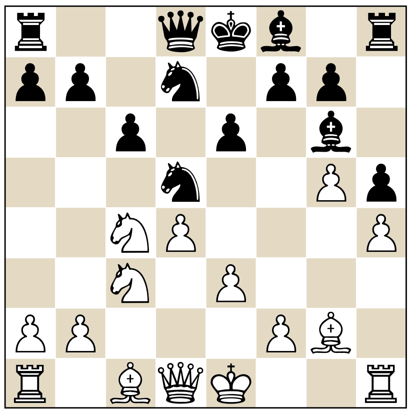
10.♘xc4!?

10.h5 doesn't win the bishop for many reasons, but the usual continuation is 10.♘xg6, when White gets the bishop pair. In return, Black is ahead in development and quite solid, and if he needs counterplay, he can strike in the centre at the right moment.

10...h5

A natural move, fixing the pawn structure on the kingside once and for all. I see no reason why 10...h6 shouldn't be a viable alternative.

11.g5 ♘d5 12.♗g2



12...♘5b6!?

The knight should move in order for Black to prepare some central breaks. Now White also has to answer a question: what to do with the c4-knight? Instead, 12...b5 looked quite tempting, but I didn't see a clear follow-up after 13.♘d2, when the knight on d2 does look somewhat clumsy for the moment, but the day may come when Black will regret weakening his queenside.

13.b3

Of course, Loek plays the most ambitious continuation. White has nice control of the centre and more space, so I found it challenging to come up with a good idea in this position.

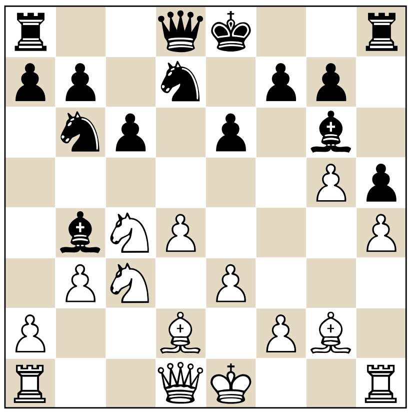
> 'One can, however, always be sure that Captain Loek will never go for simplifications. Pride above all.'

13...♗b4

OK, this should be good.

14.♗d2

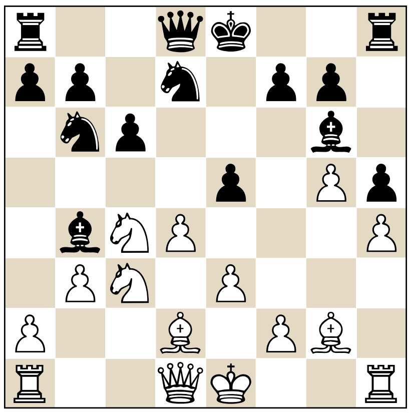
And now?



14...e5!?

Played after a very long think. After quite a while I realized that this break is the key, but it still wasn't easy to settle on the right move order.

Another option was 14...0-0 15.0-0 e5!? (15...♘xc4 16.bxc4 e5 would be the most primitive move order, but I was hoping to get a better version of this), when after 16.♘xe5 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♕d3!? Black definitely gets some play in return for his pawn (in fact, 17...♕e7 is a better way, even with castling included: 18.f4 ♖fd8 19.♕e1 ♕e6!), but it wasn't clear to me how to use my activity after something like 18.♕c1 ♖fd8 19.♗e1, followed by f4.

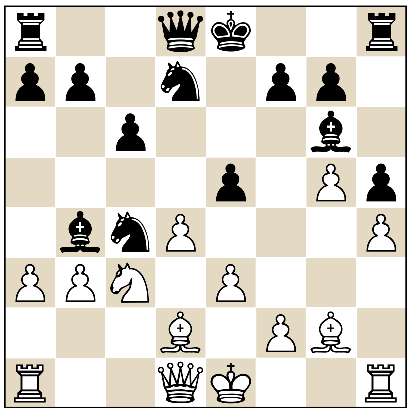


15.a3?!

A better move was 15.0-0!. Capturing on d4 is apparently impossible, so I would have taken quite some time here, choosing between castling and 15...♘xc4 (indeed bad is 15...exd4? 16.♘e4! ♗xd2 17.♘ed6+!, but 15...0-0!? would transpose to the note on 14...0-0, when the position is highly complicated) 16.bxc4 0-0 17.♕b3 ♗a5 18.♖ad1, and White has a much nicer setup than in the game, but I think Black should still be doing totally fine: 18...exd4 19.exd4 ♘b6.

After 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 Black has 16...♕e7! 17.a3! ♗xa3! 18.0-0 ♖d8, and although it seems very complex, it looked quite promising for Black during the game.

15...♘xc4



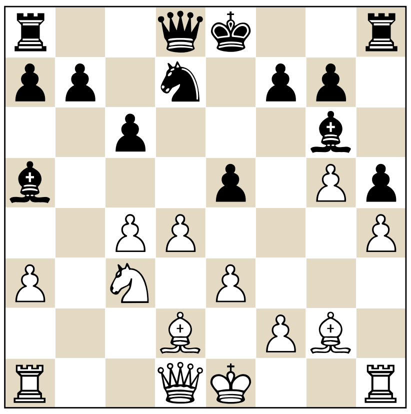
When Loek started thinking here, I realized that he had missed the cute 16...♘b2! after 16.axb4?!.

16.bxc4 ♗a5

Loek van Wely
Anish Giri
TATA STEEL

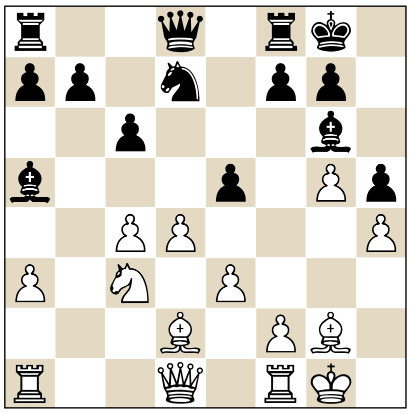
NEW IN CHESS

As Loek van Wely racks his brain, Anish Giri seems to face the future with optimism. And the game has barely begun!



Now I was very satisfied with my position. White has more space in the centre and on the kingside, but nearly all his pawns are potentially very vulnerable.

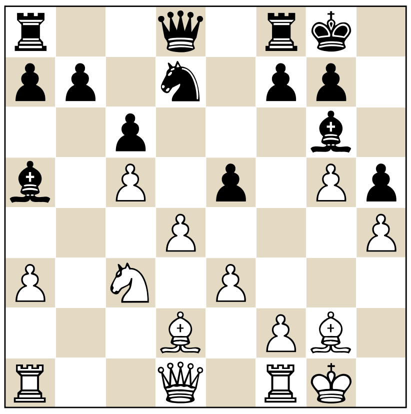
17.0-0 0-0



18.c5 At first I was worried about this move, but when I thought a bit longer, I realized that A: This move will happen, and B: I should be happy with it. White takes away the b6-square from the knight, but the d4-pawn becomes even more vulnerable.

18.♘e2 seemed best to me, but after 18...♗xd2 19.♕xd2 f6! Black can put pressure on White's overextended pawns.

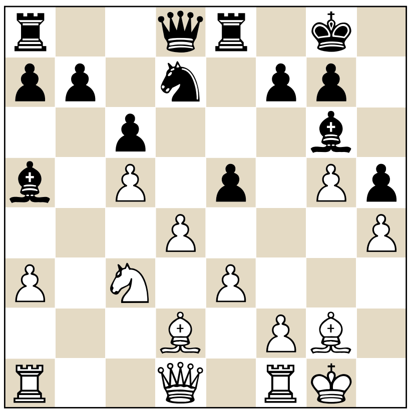
18.♘e4 was probably the best way to simplify, when Black is comfortable after 18...♗xd2 19.♕xd2 ♕c7.



18...♖e8

A useful move. Now Black has ...♘f8, putting pressure on the d4-pawn.

18...f6 was the only alternative I considered. At first it looks great, but after 19.f4! fxg5 20.hxg5! exd4 21.exd4, 21...♘xc5 won't work because of ♕b3+ later on, and it is really hard to somehow exploit White's overextended pawn structure here.

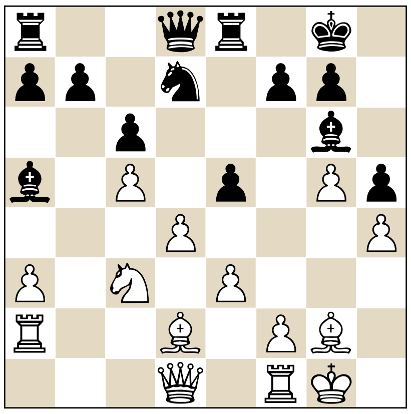


19.♖a2?!

This looks natural, but apparently another rook move would have been more precise.

Correct was 19.♖c1! exd4 (19...♘f8 is met with 20.d5!, although after 20...e4! the position is unclear. But 19...♗f5!? is cool) 20.exd4 ♘f8 21.♗f4! (this maintains the balance – after 21.d5 cxd5 22.♘xd5 ♗xd2 23.♕xd2 there is 23...♗e4!).

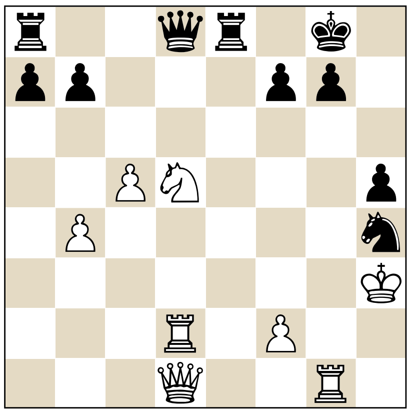
Now I had to dig in and look for an advantage, as I felt that the tables had already started turning.



19...♕c7! Very strong. Strangely enough, it took me ages to come up with this simple move.

After 19...♘f8 20.d5! is messy.

My first instinct was to play 19...exd4 20.exd4 ♘f8, when White will go 21.d5!. Here Black has many ways to proceed, but I didn't see any way to get anything real out of White's somewhat weakened king: 21...cxd5 (21...♗d3 looked tempting as well: 22.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 23.♗xe1 ♗c4 24.♖b2, with a balanced position) 22.♘xd5 ♗e4 23.♗b4! ♗xg2 24.♔xg2 ♘g6 25.♖d2 ♘xh4+ 26.♔h3! ♗xb4 27.axb4 ♕xg5 28.♖g1 ♕d8



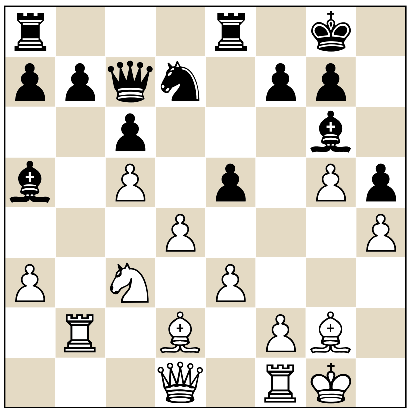
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and now some knight hopping – 29.♘f4 ♕c7 30.♘d5 ♕d8 or 29.♘b6 ♕f6 30.♘d5 ♕d8 – would eventually lead to move repetition.

Another waiting move I considered was 19...♖b8, but after 20.♖b2 I didn't see anything better than 20...♕c7 anyway.

20.♖b2 20.f4 is nicely met by 20...exd4 21.exd4 ♗f5! 22.♕xh5 ♖ad8!.

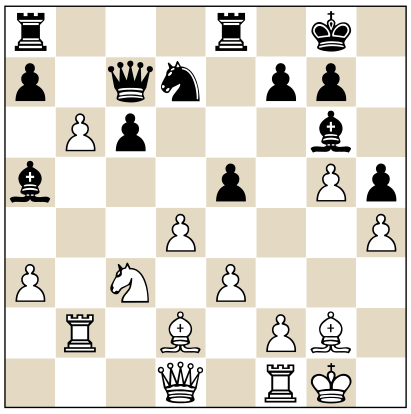
20.♘e2 was maybe the most solid option, but Black is already clearly better.



20...b6?! I took this decision rather quickly, after seeing some ghosts in lines starting with 20...♖ad8. The move is good and positionally sound, but the simple 20...♖ad8 was stronger.

After 20...♖ad8! White has trouble coming up with a good move. I had expected 21.♕a4 exd4, and here I got confused by ♘d5 or ♘b5, I don't even remember exactly. I guess I missed that after 22.♘d5 (22.exd4 didn't look so easy either, but in fact after 22...♗xc3 23.♗xc3, there is a killer: 23...♕f4!) 22...cxd5 23.♗xa5 there is the simple reply 23...b6.

21.cxb6



21...axb6 Maybe I somewhat over-

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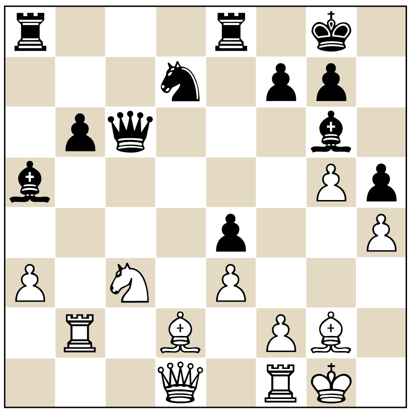
estimated my position here. In fact, the game was still far from over, while I was already thinking about slowly collecting the goods.

21...♗xb6! was even better, but I liked the look of my move.

22.d5 e4 I felt that Loek was very happy here and indeed he was surprisingly optimistic about this position. In fact, it is Black who is having all the fun. The a3-pawn is weak, but more importantly, White now has to pay some serious attention to his king, while my 'ugly' bishop on g6 cements my whole kingside.

23.dxc6 ♕xc6

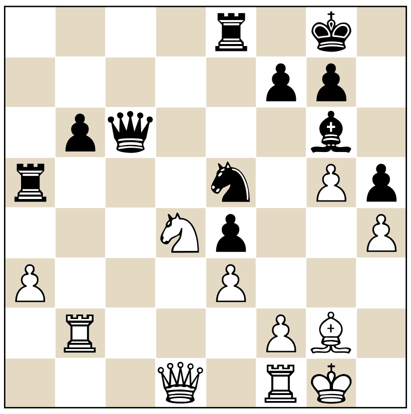


24.♘b5?

The wrong direction. Eventually it will take Loek two extra moves to get the knight to its ideal square.

After 24.♘e2 ♘e5 25.♗xa5 ♖xa5 26.♘f4 ♖xa3 White would have had very decent chances, but he should avoid the natural 27.♕d4 in view of 27...♕c8!.

24...♘e5 25.♗xa5 ♖xa5 26.♘d4



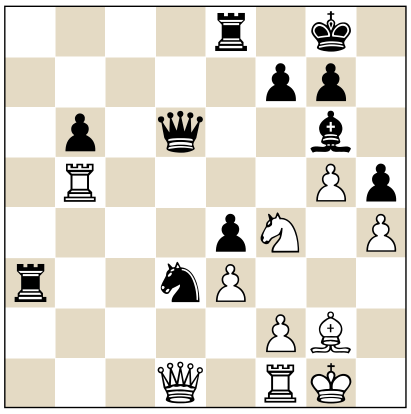
Now many moves are interesting. Mating White with ...♕d6 (c7) and ...♘g4 won't be easy in view of ♘e2, but I decided that picking up the a3-pawn wouldn't be so bad either.

26...♕d6 27.♘e2 ♘d3!

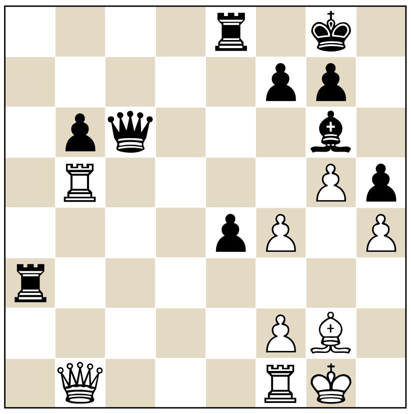
Pity about the mate, but the knight isn't doing too badly here either.

28.♘f4 ♖xa3 29.♖b5

Now I found a nice way to transform my advantage.

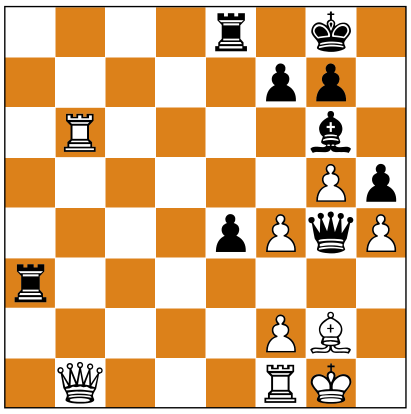


29...♕c6! 30.♕b1 ♘xf4 31.exf4



31...♕d7! On the one hand, it seems like an achievement for White to get rid of the pawns on the queenside, but upon closer inspection it turns out that his kingside pawns are going to fall one after the other.

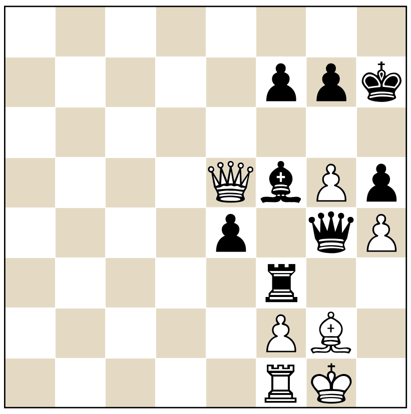
32.♖xb6 ♕g4!



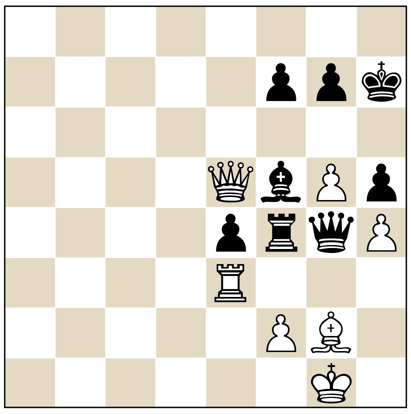
Pure joy. White's position is not just hopeless, but completely hopeless. The material is equal, but the differences between the kings and the pawns are striking. I hope the editor of the magazine will give the diagram of this position a special colour.

32...e3!? is less conceptual, but equally killing.

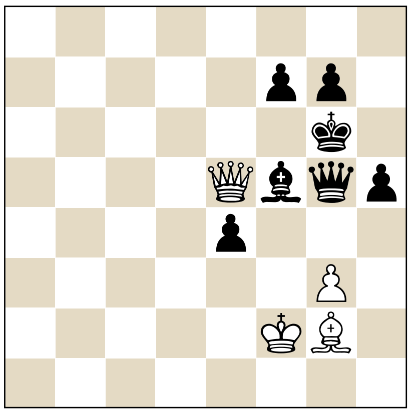
33.♖b8 ♖xb8 34.♕xb8+ ♔h7 35.♕e5 ♖f3! 36.f5 ♗xf5



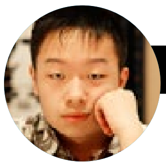
First one down. **37.♖e1 ♖f4 38.♖e3**



38...♗g6!? I didn't want to do this to Uncle Loek, but I just couldn't resist. Black has all the time in the world to pick up the pawns. **39.♕d6 ♕xh4 40.♖g3 ♖g4 41.♕e5 ♖xg3 42.fxg3 ♕g4 43.♔f2 ♗f5 44.♕e7 ♔g6 45.♕e5 ♕xg5**



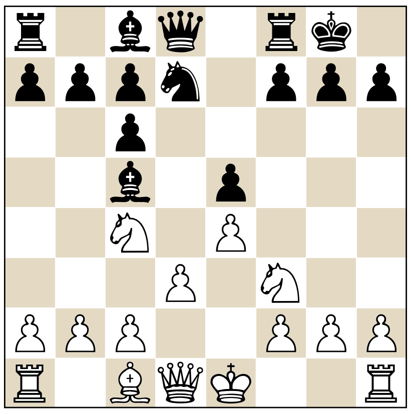
And now that all the weak pawns have fallen, there is nothing left to hold on to. White resigned.



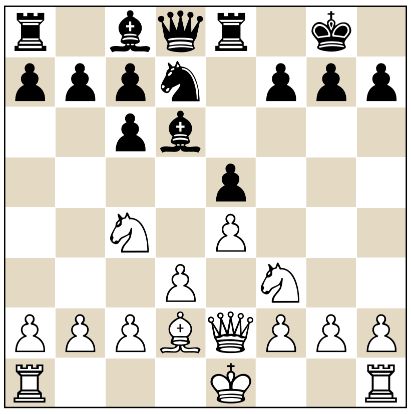
NOTES BY
Wei Yi

RL 7.1 – C65
Wei Yi
David Navara
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (9)

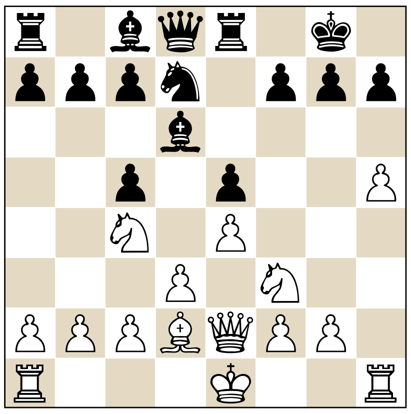
1.e4 e5!?
My opponent rarely plays 1...e5; normally he chooses the Caro-Kann Defence. But I had considered the possibility of him going for 1...e5.
2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗xc6 dxc6 6.♘bd2 0-0 7.♘c4 ♘d7



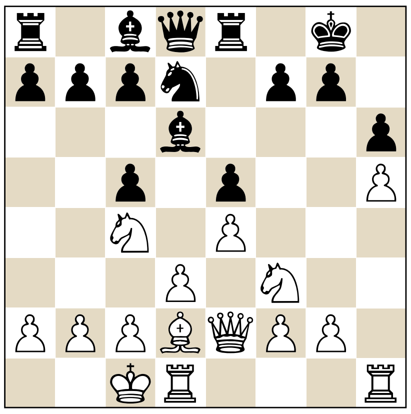
8.♕e2!?
This is a new idea (before this game, I used to go 8.0-0), aiming to prepare ♗d2 and 0-0-0, starting an attack on the kingside and trying to keep the position complex. Anand has also used this move. Interestingly enough, Caruana also played 8.♕e2 in the same round, and also followed up with h4; but, for chess historians, he played it a bit earlier than me.
8...♖e8 9.♗d2 ♗d6
Ready to manoeuvre with the black knight.



10.h4!? A novelty; but I didn't come up with it first... Something like 10 minutes earlier, Caruana first played this move against Karjakin, hoping to exert some pressure on Black's kingside. Last year the game Anand vs. Giri saw a different try when White pushed 10.g4. However, I think that the move g4 exposes the f4-square, which can be used by Black to create counterplay.
10...c5 Planning to transfer the knight to c6, but this may not be the most precise. Maybe a better try was 10...♘f8, when Black's knight guards the kingside. This looks far safer, and it was Karjakin's choice.
11.h5

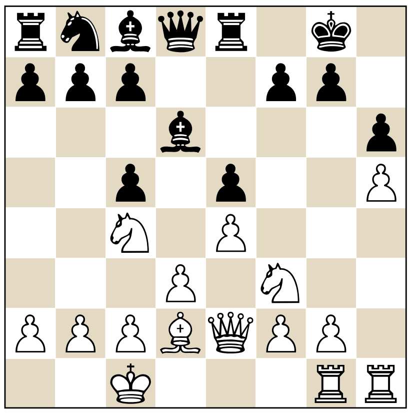


11...h6 Better was the immediate 11...♘b8, even though it gives White a chance to push his pawn; but after 12.h6!? (12.♘e3 ♘c6 13.g4!? looks good) 12...g6 White will find it difficult to make progress. And Black will start a counterattack on the queenside.
12.0-0-0

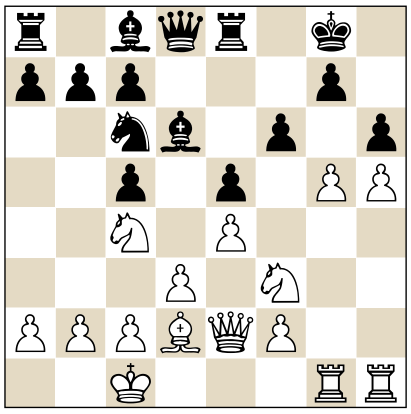


12...♘b8
This move underestimates White's attack on the kingside. Better was 12...♘f8 13.♖dg1 ♘e6 14.♕d1!, although White has the easier position.

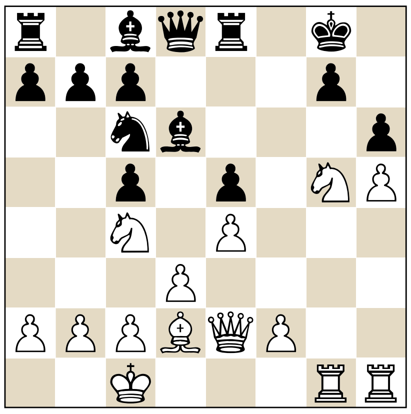
After 12...b5 13.♘xd6 cxd6 14.g4 f6 15.♖dg1! White is ready to sacrifice material for a breakthrough with g5, just as in the actual game.
13.♖dg1
13.g4 f6 14.♖dg1 was also good.



13...♘c6 Black wouldn't be happy with 13...♗g4 either, as after 14.♘e3 ♗e6 15.g4 f6 16.♘f5 Black's position collapses. For example: 16...♘c6 17.g5! fxg5 18.♘xg5 ♗xf5 19.exf5 hxg5 20.h6!, and White has a winning advantage.
14.g4 f6 15.g5!

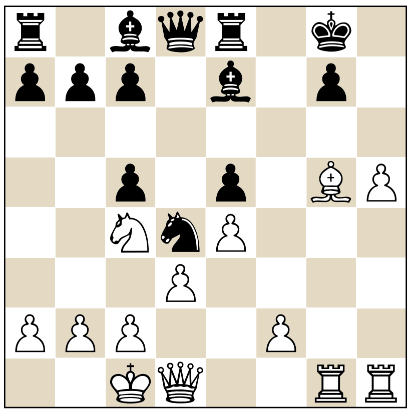


A very powerful move. White will sacrifice on g5, open up the g- and h-files and put Black's king into serious danger.
15...fxg5 16.♘xg5!



16...♘d4 Could he have saved the game by immediately taking the knight? No, he couldn't: 16...hxg5 17.♗xg5 (17.h6!? g4 18.hxg7 was also a good choice) 17...♗e7 18.♗xe7 (18.♗h6 looks even better, but then Black has 18...♔h7!) 18...♕xe7 19.h6 g5 20.♕h5 g4 21.♘e3 ♔h8 22.♘xg4 ♗xg4 23.♕xg4 ♕f7 24.♔b1!, and Black is lost, since the combined white threats of h7 and piling up against the black king are too strong. Finally, after 16...b5 White quietly continues 17.♘f3, with an attack that will quickly grow devastating.

17.♕d1 hxg5 After 17...♕f6, 18.c3! is the key move. **18.♗xg5 ♗e7**

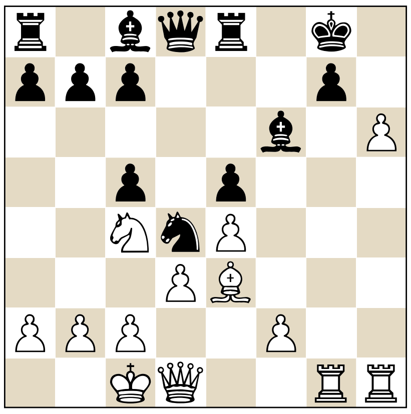


19.♗e3! Very important. This move is intended to deploy more pieces in the attack on the black king. Now Black is unable to protect both e5 and his king. By now, my opponent had used up almost all his time on the clock trying to find a solution, but all in vain.

19...♗f6 After 19...♔h7 White simply takes: 20.♘xe5.

And after 19...♘e6 20.h6, White crashes through with 20...g5 21.h7+ ♔g7 22.♘xe5, and wins.

20.h6



NEW IN CHESS

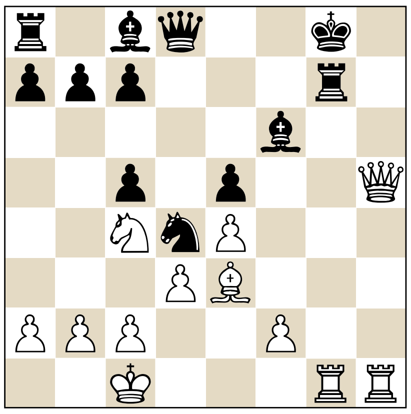
Wei Yi made a decent debut in the Masters, albeit not as spectacular as his fans may have hoped. The 16-year-old Chinese boy wonder won only one game, but that was a beauty.

20...♖e7 After 20...g5? White rounds off the attack beautifully: 21.♗xg5! ♗xg5+ 22.f4! exf4 (or 22...♘e6 23.fxg5 ♘f4 24.♕f3, and Black cannot stop the horrible g- and h-pawns) 23.♕h5 ♘e6 24.♖xg5+! ♘xg5 (24...♕xg5 25.h7+) 25.♕g6+, and Black is mated.

21.hxg7

Even simpler was 21.♕h5 ♕e8 22.♖g6.

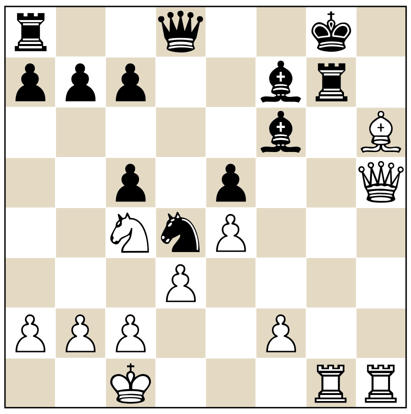
21...♖xg7 22.♕h5



22...♗e6 22...♕e7 allows 23.♕h8+ ♔f7 24.♖xg7+ ♗xg7 25.♖h7 ♔g6 26.♖xg7+! ♕xg7 27.♘xe5+ ♔f6 28.♗g5+!, and wins.

23.♗h6 The easiest win, but even more powerful was 23.♕h8+ ♔f7 24.♖xg7+ ♗xg7 25.♘xe5+ ♗xe5 (25...♔f6 26.♕h4+) 26.♖h7+ ♔g6 27.♖h6+ ♔f7 28.♕xe5, and Black is lost.

23...♗f7

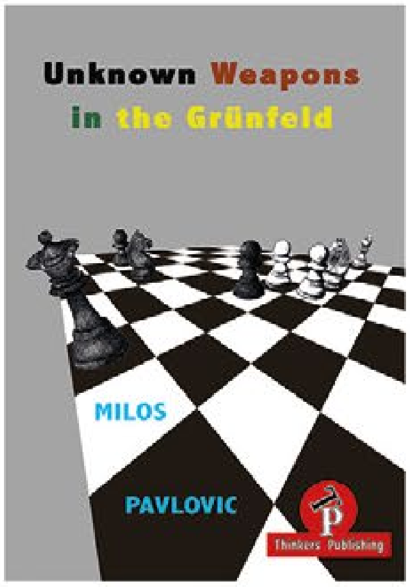


24.♗xg7 The point.

24...♗xh5 25.♗xf6+ ♔f8 26.♗xd8 ♘e2+ 27.♔b1 ♘xg1 28.♗xc7

Black resigned.

This was an excellent game that I am quite satisfied with. Unfortunately, it was also my only win in the entire event.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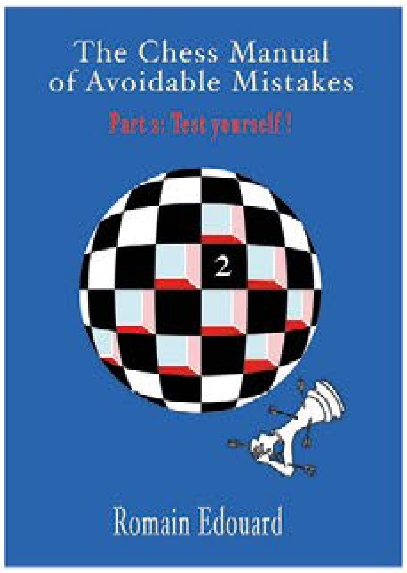
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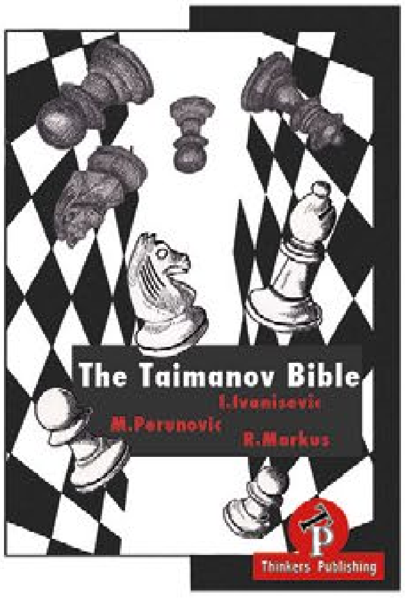
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NOTES BY
Hou Yifan

CK 4.10 – B12
Hou Yifan
David Navara
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (4)

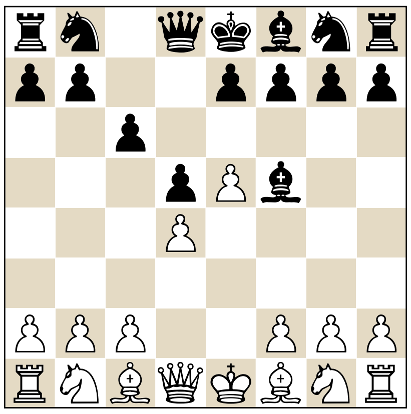
The Tata Steel Masters is always considered to be a super-tournament, and my previous performances obviously demonstrated that it can be very tough, as I got minus scores after the first four games both in 2013 and in 2015. This year the field was even stronger by average rating, but luckily my start was better.

In the fourth round, I faced the highest-rated Czech player, David Navara. He is a very creative player, but sometimes not so stable. So, of course I was hoping for something in the game, and having drawn my first three, I wanted at least to try to get to a positive score.

1.e4 c6

Most of our previous games had featured the Sicilian Defence, but the Caro-Kann didn't really come as a surprise for me, as it has been one of David's main openings in recent years.

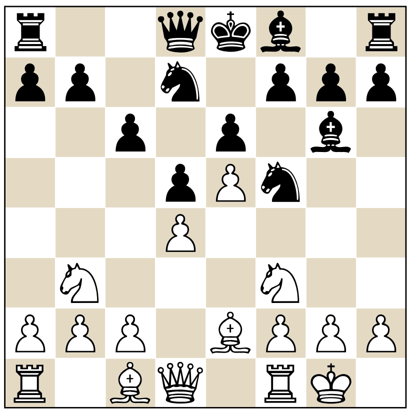
2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5



4.♘f3

In Round 2, Adams had tried 4.h4 against David. That game turned into a drawish endgame very soon. So I decided to go for another variation, which is also mainstream today.

4...e6 5.♗e2 ♘d7 6.0-0 ♗g6 7.♘bd2 ♘h6 8.♘b3 ♘f5

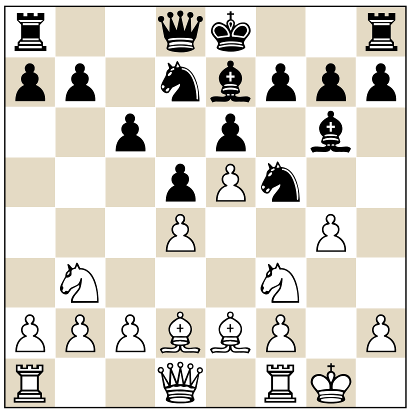


9.♗d2

Another interesting theoretical path is 9.a4, which has been played in the games MVL-Navara, Biel 2015, and Grischuk-Navara, World Rapid Championship 2015. Both games were slightly better for White. The idea is to gain space on the queenside and then follow up with c4, slowly putting pressure on the centre.

> ‘There was a simple way to tear apart the black set-up. Think about it for a while. Do you see it?’

9...♗e7 10.g4

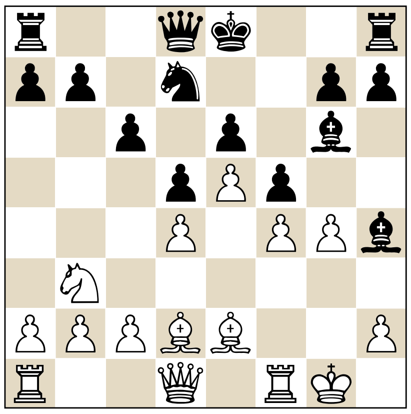


10...♘h4

The main move, but an update from David!

In his two games in 2015, David played 10...♘h6 and got a good result. But honestly speaking, withdrawing the knight looks a bit weird to me, as the h6-knight is always regarded as bad, especially when the f5-square is controlled by the g4-pawn.

11.♘xh4 ♗xh4 12.f4 f5



13.c4

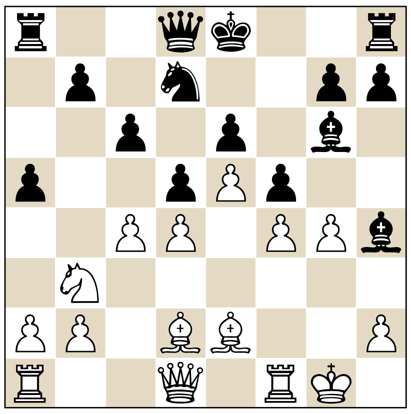
A rare move, which was only played once, back in 2008, although it's a common idea in this type of position.

In this well-known position of the line, White has two major alternatives. First there is 13.exf6 ♕xf6 14.g5 ♕f7 15.♘a5, a tricky line that requires deep study to produce a conclusion. From the games played we can see that Black might be able to hold the endgame a pawn down.

Then there is 13.♗d3 ♗e7, when it's not obvious how White will find a clear plan to develop the position.

13...a5

Eliminating the possibility of ♘a5, but at the cost of weakening the queenside, particularly ceding the b5-square to White's bishop.



14.a4

After some thinking I decided to play this quiet move instead of using the b5-square immediately: 14.cxd5 cxd5

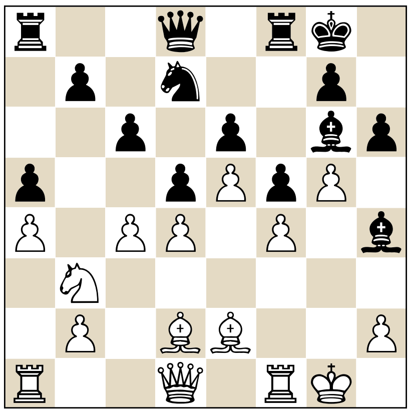
15.♗b5 ♗e7 (after 15...0-0 16.♗xa5!. It looks to me that Black will have to sacrifice some material here to ensure an unbalanced position, but the compensation is insufficient) 16.a4 b6. And this is similar to what happened in the game, the only difference being that there is no open g-file. Hard to say which side will benefit from this difference.

14...0-0

Maybe the simplest way was to retreat the bishop first, as it makes no sense to stay on h4 anyway, except for offering White some extra opportunities to capture it tactically. So 14...♗e7 15.♖c1 0-0, with an unclear position.

15.g5 h6

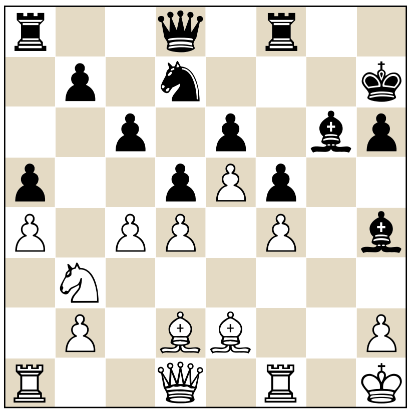
Since the bishop has been blocked, this is the only way to rescue it.



16.gxh6

I was trying to find a way to maintain the g5-pawn and keep blocking the h4-bishop, but unfortunately it doesn't work: 16.♗h5 ♕e8 17.♗xg6 ♕xg6 18.♔h1 hxg5 19.fxg5 f4!, and because of the threat of ...♕e4+ the evaluation has flipped to Black's favour, as the white king is suddenly exposed.

16...gxh6 17.♔h1 ♔h7



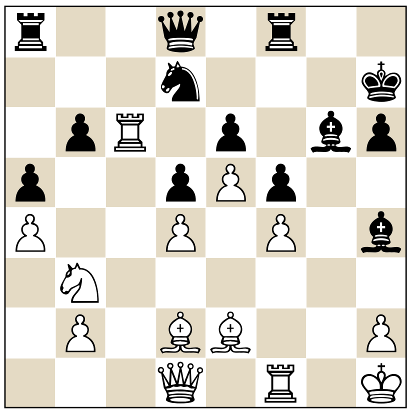
ALINA L'AMI

Special guest Judit Polgar watches Hou Yifan. 'I am no longer playing and don't feel stress anymore. But watching her game I do feel this nervous feeling in my stomach again.'

18.cxd5

The alternative 18.c5 was worth considering, since a5 would become an 'isolated pawn': 18...b6 19.cxb6 ♕xb6 20.♗xa5! ♖xa5 21.♘xa5 ♕xa5 22.♗h5. Black has to control the passed a-pawn, but meanwhile the attack along the g-file is also pretty dangerous.

18...cxd5 19.♖c1 b6 20.♖c6



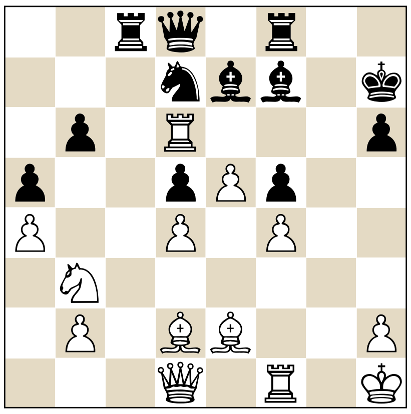
Wijk aan Zee 2016 cat. XX

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2844	*	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	9	2881
2	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2787	½	*	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	0	0	½	1	1	8	2831
3	Ding Liren	IGM	CHN	2766	½	0	*	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	8	2833
4	Wesley So	IGM	USA	2773	½	½	½	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	7	2774
5	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2798	½	½	½	0	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	7	2772
6	Pavel Eljanov	IGM	UKR	2760	0	0	0	½	½	*	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	7	2775
7	Wei Yi	IGM	CHN	2706	½	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	6½	2750
8	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2747	½	½	½	½	0	0	½	*	½	½	½	1	1	½	6½	2747
9	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2769	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	1	½	0	½	6	2716
10	David Navara	IGM	CZE	2730	½	1	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	*	½	0	½	½	5½	2691
11	Evgeny Tomashevsky	IGM	RUS	2728	0	1	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	*	½	½	½	5½	2692
12	Hou Yifan	IGM	CHN	2673	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	1	½	*	½	0	5	2666
13	Michael Adams	IGM	ENG	2744	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	*	½	5	2660
14	Loek van Wely	IGM	NED	2640	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	*	5	2668

20...♖c8? I hadn't really expected this move. The most natural choice seemed to be 20...♗f7, although both players thought it was a passive defence. But what to do? After 21.♕c2 Black has 21...♖g8!, creating counterplay. Now White has to be careful to maintain a space advantage with 22.♗e3 (and not 22.♖c1?, when 22...♗f2! is highly annoying, and the white king doesn't look good at all).

21.♖xe6 ♗f7 22.♖d6 ♗e7

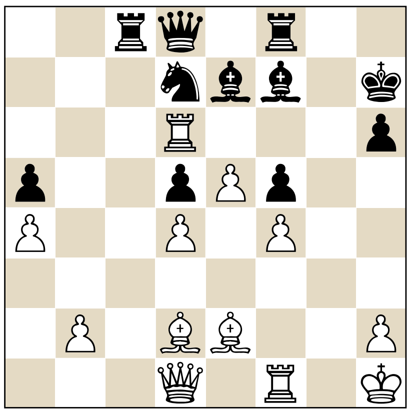
The second crucial moment.



23.♗d3

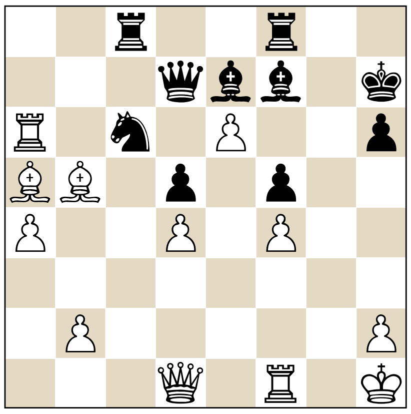
This was my idea when I decided to take the pawn on e6. But there was a simple way to tear apart the black set-up. Think about it for a while. Do you see it?

The answer is 23.♘xa5! and now, after 23...bxa5 (23...♗xd6 24.♘b7 is a disaster)



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

24.♖a6! (a hidden move! I was only calculating 24.♗xa5 during the game, but it doesn't work because of 24...♕xa5 25.♖xd7 ♖c7, when White has a perfect pawn structure but will not win) 24...♘b8 25.♗xa5 ♕d7 26.♗b5 ♘c6 27.e6!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The key move of the combination; without it Black would have survived. Now 27...♗xe6 (27...♕xe6 28.♖e1) 28.♕c1, and White gets the piece back with two connected passed pawns on the board.

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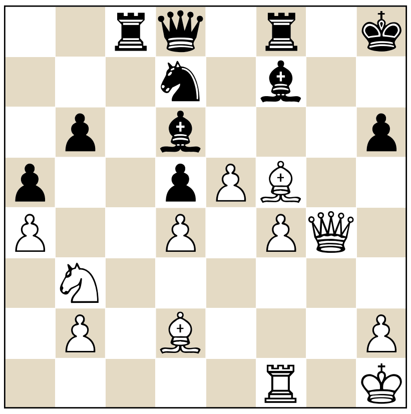
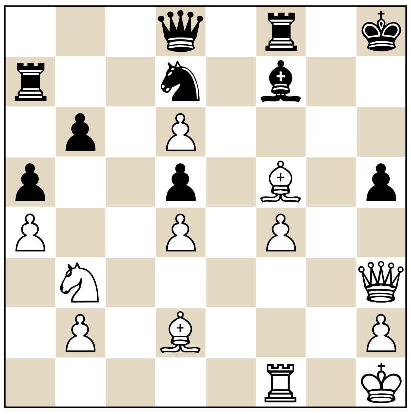
23...♗xd6 24.♗xf5+ ♔h8 25.♕g4
The last crucial moment of the game. Many pieces are hanging, and it's really difficult to decide which one to protect.



25...♖c7
When I joined Yasser (Seirawan) for the commentary after the game, he pointed out the defence 25...♖g8 26.♕h3 ♗f8 27.e6 (the only piece you could take immediately is the d7-knight, but that is poisoned: 27.♗xd7 ♗g6! and again the king on h1 becomes a target!) 27...♗g6 28.♗xg6 ♖xg6 29.exd7 ♖c7 30.f5 ♕xd7 31.♗f4. The same idea we will see later in the game: the bishop controlling the e5-square will be much stronger than a rook.

But the best, and maybe hardest way to find over the board, was 25...h5 26.♕h3 ♘f6!. A brilliant idea! Three pieces up for grabs, but none of them palatable: 27.♗xc8 (27.exd6 ♖c6 28.d7 ♖d6 is a much better version of what happened in the game) 27...♕xc8 28.f5 ♕c2! 29.exd6 ♕e4+, and once again the exposed position of the white king saves Black.

26.♕h3 h5 27.exd6 ♖a7



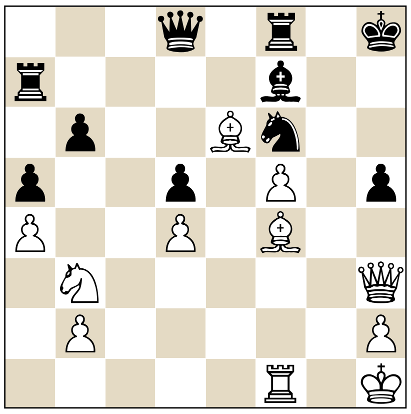
MARIA EMELIANOVA

Sarkhan Gashimov presented fair-play prizes in memory of his brother Vugar Gashimov to Jorden van Foreest (Challengers) and David Navara (Masters).

28.♗e6
I still needed to be careful, as a tempting simple idea would lead to a different result:
28.♗xd7 ♕xd7 29.f5 ♗g6!, and White is not in time to play ♗f4-e5.

28...♘f6
Obviously, the d6-pawn should be captured, and 28...♕e8 29.♖e1! ♘f6 30.f5 is also hopeless.

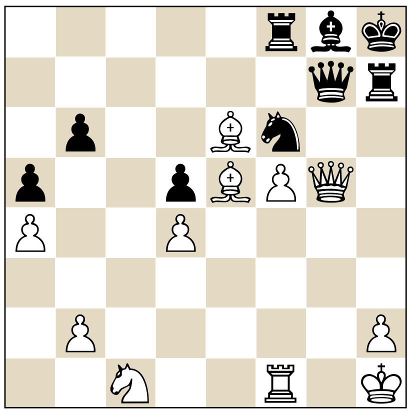
29.f5 ♕xd6 30.♗f4 ♕d8



31.♗e5
Many people were saying that the first idea that came to their mind was to manoeuvre the knight to e5: 31.♘d2, with the unstoppable ♘f3-e5. That would also yield a win, but putting the bishop on e5, tying up the king, and taking the knight to f4 via c1-d3, looked even more attractive to me.

31...♗g8
It's already very difficult to come up with any suggestions. If 31...♔h7, 32.♖g1 and wins.

32.♕xh5+ ♖h7 33.♕g5 ♕e7 34.♘c1 ♕g7



35.♕xg7+
Maybe the 'best' way was 35.♕f4, to keep the queen and create some romantic checkmates with the 'far away' knight, but the endgame is more than good enough.

35...♖xg7 36.♘d3 ♖g4 37.♘f4 ♔h7 38.h3 ♖g3 39.♘g6 ♖xh3+ 40.♔g2 Black resigned. ■

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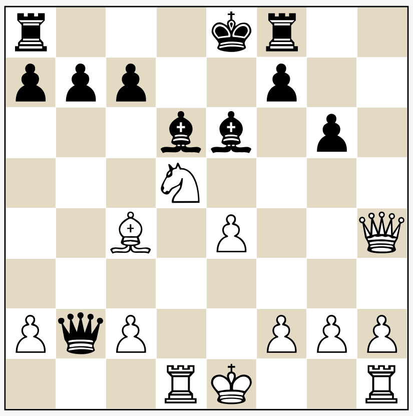
Solutions on page 63



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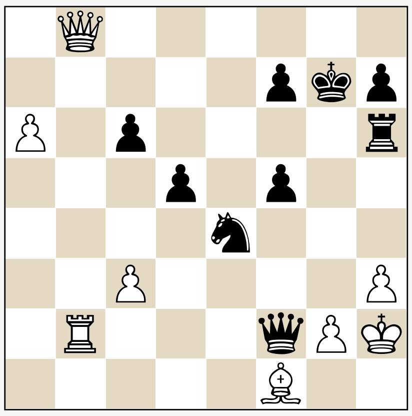

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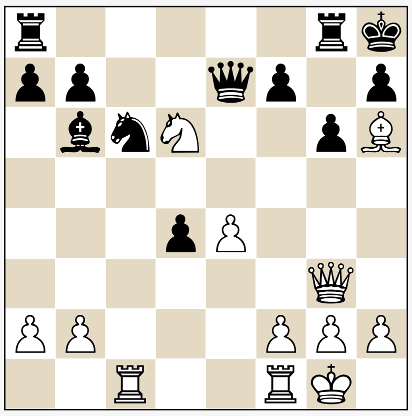

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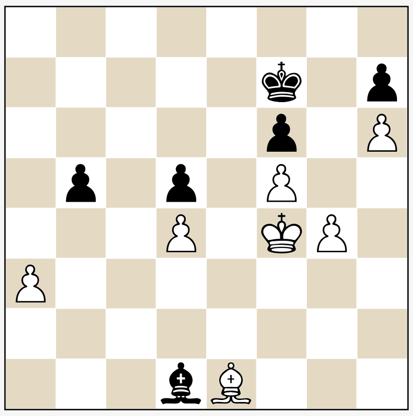

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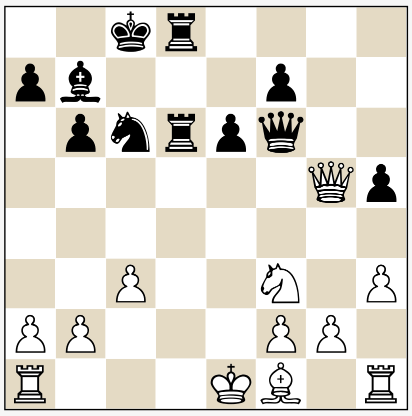
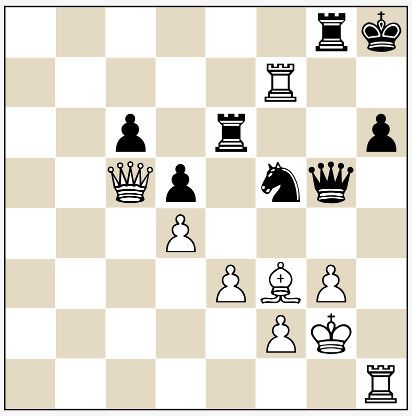
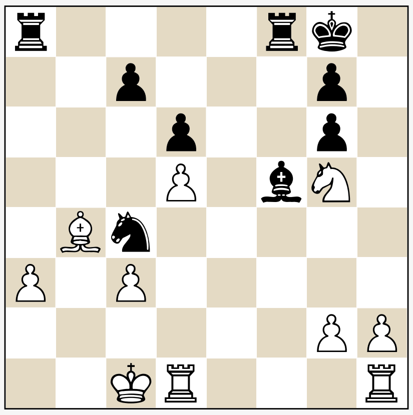


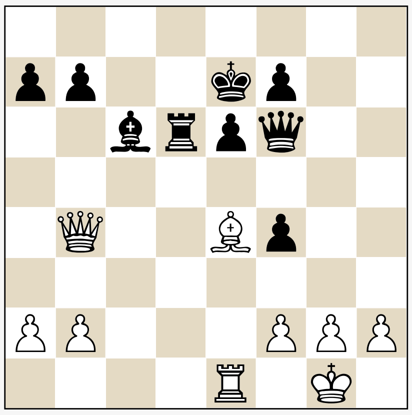
5. Black to move



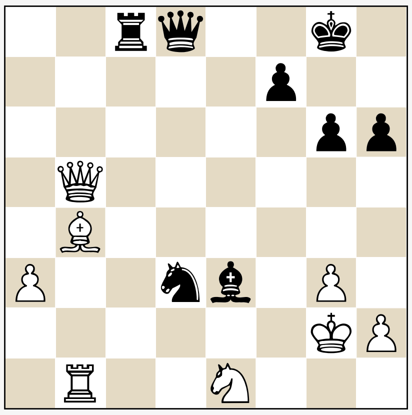
6. Black to move



7. Black to move



8. Black to move



9. Black to move

Short Stories

BETRAYAL

One would have thought that the jarring image of Pia Cramling – from progressive, feminist Sweden – and others – from India, Russia, China etc. – swathed in obligatory headscarves at the FIDE Women's Grand Prix in Tehran, would have solicited heated criticism, but if the deplorably supine chess press has had any opinion at all on the matter, I am unaware of it being expressed. Of course, all countries have different laws and customs which, in general, should be respected. But when a statute impinges upon personal liberty, to the point of becoming an odious imposition, then matters have gone too far.

The gentleman doth protest too much, methinks, I hear you say. Well, yes and no. There are clearly far worse things than being compelled to cover one's hair with a cloth. It is not an issue to die in the ditch for. But if the act of repression is small, the symbolism is nevertheless great. The fact that precisely none of these participants wear scarves out of modesty when free to choose for themselves, is an indication of the resentment with which this law is viewed. Despite having visited the country numerous times, most recently in 2013, I am yet to see any Iranian woman in a headscarf at home. This invidious means of subjugating women is relatively modern in the context of Persian history, being introduced only after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The injunction hinges upon a questionable, if not to say downright spurious, theological interpretation of the Quran. Many other Muslim countries have no such sartorial requirement. Prior to the ascension of the ascetic, fundamentalist Ayatollah Khomeini – who also banned lipstick, Coca-Cola, music and chess in his infinite wisdom – the streets of Tehran thronged with uncovered and even mini-skirted ladies.

Why does this matter? Well, in article 1.2 of the FIDE statutes, the governing body 'rejects discriminatory treatment for ... religious reasons or on account of gender.'

By allowing the Women's Grand Prix to take place in Iran, FIDE flouts this lofty oath on both counts. It is a betrayal. The headscarf directive, which operates even during play, lest we forget, is an example of overt, gender-based discrimination, underpinned by religious sophistry. Given that the event is a qualifier for the 2017 Women's World Championship, it would be disingenuous to suggest that the participants had the choice of whether to go, or not. Players should never be placed in a position where they have to decide between a point of principle or a thwarted career. And if they grudgingly acquiesce to suffer indignity in silence, this should never be mistaken for approval.

The situation in chess needs to be seen in context: the Islamic Republic routinely discriminates against women in other sports. A ban on female attendance of football stadiums (lest they become corrupted by the carnal image of exposed male thighs) was extended, in 2012, to include volleyball. In 2014, a 25 year-old British-Iranian women, Ghoncheh Ghavami, was sentenced to one year in jail for the heinous crime of attempting to enter a ground. A recent article in *The New York Times* showed that Iran's pledge to allow female spectators at a volleyball tournament on Kish – an idyll in the Persian Gulf – was nothing more than a sham. Either the International Volleyball Federation connived in the imposture (which, if they resemble football or athletics in terms of ethics, is highly likely) or they were duped.

Iran, of course, has the right to make whatever laws it chooses. That doesn't mean FIDE has to accept them. What if the sponsors of the next Women's Grand Prix required the participants to wear burqas? Would the Presidential Board baulk at that? As long as funds keep flowing into the black hole of AGON, I wouldn't count on them caring one jot. The FIDE brand is so tarnished that they are prepared to take funds from anywhere.

These days, the cry of 'Islamophobia' is raised by imams and deluded western apologists alike, whenever criticism of the Religion of Peace is perceived or, indeed, imagined. The purpose of this convenient, blanket taunt is, of course, to close down any discussion. Had the Israeli organisers of the European Individual Championship in Jerusalem last year, requested that the participants wear yarmulkes out of respect to the holiest city in Judaism, the clamour of protest from these same voices would have been deafening. You can keep religion out of all sporting events, or you can keep it out of none – but you can't have it both ways.

Islam and chess have been in the headlines for other reasons, of late, after I erroneously tweeted that the game had been banned in the Kingdom of Saudi

> ‘Players should never be placed in a position where they have to decide between a point of principle or a thwarted career.’

Arabia – a story that rapidly went viral. The source of my information was a board member of the Saudi Arabia Chess Association, who had messaged me in a panic with the news. The cause of his consternation was a video in which the Grand Mufti, Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al ash-Sheikh, who had, in response to a viewer’s question, on a weekly television programme, issued a fatwa against our beloved game. Never mind that the Quran says absolutely nothing about chess. When the supreme cleric in an extremely religious country pronounces on such matters, it is potentially very serious. On the basis of this judgment, the religious police have the right to shut down tournaments, or even the association itself. However, it soon transpired the situation was not quite as bad as it seemed. A tournament was even taking place unhindered in Mecca at the time. BBC World News, who contacted me for an interview, delved into the subject at length and provided some of the detailed and nuanced background information below from their team of Arabic-speaking experts on the region. I am grateful to them for their elucidation for what otherwise would have been an impenetrable matter.

The first thing that emerged was that the video was not new – dating from 2014. It had, until that moment, passed almost unnoticed and without consequence. Secondly, it was obvious that the miffed Mufti didn’t have much of a clue what chess was. He naively assumed it involved gambling, which is banned anyway – although I will admit he might have had a fair point when he proclaimed that it foments enmity between opponents. Thirdly, the Mufti is sick and thought to suffer from dementia. Fourthly, it is believed that privately King Salman does not hold him in high regard. Finally, various members of the royal family apparently play the game, as I learned from someone who has experienced their competitiveness first-hand.

The Saudi Arabia Chess Association only became a FIDE member in 2014. It does not yet have government recognition – previous applications having been turned down on the basis of an earlier fatwa, dating from 1975. However, I understand that the bureaucracy, which generally moves at a chelonian pace, is now examining the possibility of rescinding previous judgements. Let us hope they do so. Saudis, surprisingly, comprise the eighth biggest group, by nationality, on my Facebook fan-page – admittedly not the most scientific of measures. If this is even vaguely representative of the level of chess interest in the country, there should be significant demand for tournaments. Indeed, photographs that have circulated on the Internet recently tend to support this hypothesis.

Changing subject: It is most satisfying when a published article brings an unexpected benefit. My mention of the Westminster Chess Club Papers, in New In Chess 2015/7, led to one kindly reader, Charles van der Westhuizen, contacting me and offering to sell the first seven volumes (1868-1875) of this rare publication – to the immense envy of my esteemed editor! I also purchased, most fittingly as former President of the Commonwealth Chess Association, the ‘South African Chess Magazine’ from 1934-48, and the ‘South African Chess Player’ from 1953-1986.

New bookshelves are being erected as I write. As you can imagine, I haven’t yet had time to absorb all this new material. However a bit of sleuthing led to what I initially believed was a most exciting discovery. A signature in pencil of ‘Col. Chisholm, Cheltenham’ in the Westminster Papers brought me to a Wikipedia entry on a British cavalry officer who died heroically, leading a charge, at the Battle of Elandslaagte, during the Second Anglo-Boer War. His daring action was commemorated by such luminaries as Arthur Conan Doyle and Paul Kruger, the President of South Africa!

Alas, it was not to be. Calle Erlandsson from Sweden pointed out I had the wrong Colonel Chisholm. My guy died not from gun-shots on a far-flung field in 1899, but rather more quietly, in retirement, in Cheltenham, in 1901. The *British Chess Magazine* mourned the unexpected passing of this prominent local player in the December issue. I have no idea how his possessions eventually ended up in a bookshop in Johannesburg in the 1980s, but I have to accept that my romantic story is almost certainly incorrect. ■

Adhiban moves up to the Masters

The Tata Steel Challengers ended in a three-way tie for first. Asked at the prize-giving if he was the deserved winner on tiebreak, **ADHIBAN BASKARAN** didn't have to think long before he got the audience laughing with a self-assured 'Of course!' Next year the 23-year-old Indian will make his debut in the Masters and happily brave cold and windy Wijk aan Zee again. The winner tells his tale.

The first time I set foot in the historical village of Wijk aan Zee was in late 2011, when I won the Cultural Village tournament and earned the right to play in the 'C-Group' of the 2012 Tata Steel tournament. Unfortunately, I didn't manage to give my best and finished in shared third place. I had to wait for four years for my next chance to compete in this great event, but this time I was one step closer to the Masters, since I had been invited to play in the Challengers. And it felt as if this could be my year!

I had a good start and was thinking nothing could go wrong, but little did I know how exciting it was going to be (at least for the spectators!). The cold and windy weather that Wijk aan Zee is famous for got to me and I started to experience some mild illness and was not getting enough sleep. One such instance was very surprising. When I returned to my hotel after the round, the winds were just terrible and I had to literally fight my way through, but Hou Yifan and her mother were coolly taking a walk in that weather (please note, into the wind, not away from it!). I wanted to act cool (as if this weather doesn't affect me, why would it?), but I could barely manage a smile and lumbered to the hotel like a zombie to escape the elements. Maybe only Indians think the weather is too bad?

This time I was accompanied by my dad, and the most common question I was asked was, 'Is your dad a good cook?' To which I replied, 'I hope so!', because since his bachelor days, Wijk aan Zee was the first place he had to cook again! We really didn't want to walk all the way into town in the cold weather, even though there were some nice restaurants. The only times we went was on two of the rest days (Tata Steel has three rest days, which is pretty awesome, since in India I am used to no rest days at all – and also to our fabled two rounds a day that start at 9.30 am – seriously!). We went to a nice Spanish/Cuban restaurant to have a break from Indian food (but definitely not because my dad was bad at cooking!).

Also about my dad, I would like to clarify something: his name is Baskaran, while my name is

NEW IN CHESS

Adhiban Baskaran: 'I firmly told myself: This is my year and I am gonna win this one against all odds, be it illness, mental fatigue or psychological barriers!'

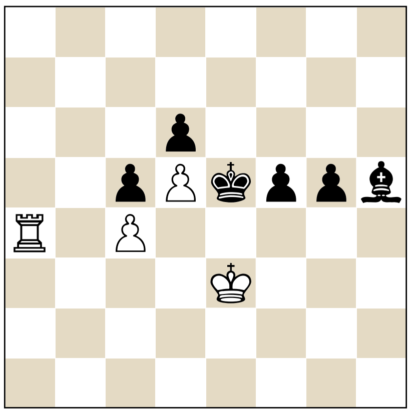
Adhiban. In India our last name is our first name! So in India my name is Baskaran Adhiban, but abroad I prefer it to be Adhiban Baskaran, with my given name first. This leads to a lot of funny situations, since everyone assumes that I am 'Baskaran' and when I introduce my dad as Baskaran their reaction is often like, 'What? Then what are you called, boy?'

But enough silliness; time to kick off the tournament! I had a spectacular start, scoring 5/6, and then I had an important game against Dreev, who was sharing the lead with the same number of points. I won a cool game thanks to an interesting novelty, and this game was definitely one of my best in the tournament.

With this win I managed to get rid of one contender (for a while), but the next one came in the form of Safarli. Thus far, I had been playing really decent chess, but once I had taken the lead it started messing up my head and my level of play dropped in the next two rounds. I drew against L'Ami in a worse position and lost the next one against Jorden van Foreest.

But luckily I was able to forget the loss and managed to win a crucial round against Safarli (who was also sharing the lead) and get back what I had lost against Jorden (the lead, of course; my revenge will have to wait). Once more I managed to get rid of my nearest rival, but an older and experienced rival returned! In the next round, against the top seed of the event, Nisipeanu, I ran into big trouble and was very close to losing. But

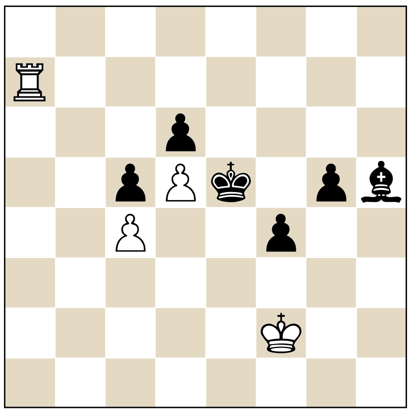
I pulled off a miraculous endgame save! Although this was an epic save, the result allowed Dreev to catch up with me. The next round was the typical scenario of over-pushing against a lower-rated player (in this case Nino Batsiashvili – who also made a draw against Magnus Carlsen in Qatar!) and achieving a losing position. But once again I escaped with a draw. Two spectacular saves in a row? It was as if a guardian angel was watching over me! Let's have a look at my escape against Nino Batsiashvili.



Adhiban-Batsiashvili
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (12)
position after 46...f5

47.♖a7 The computer considers this position totally equal, but in a practical game things tend to be far more challenging. Sometimes, White needs to make a series of moves to save the position!

47...f4+ 48.♔f2

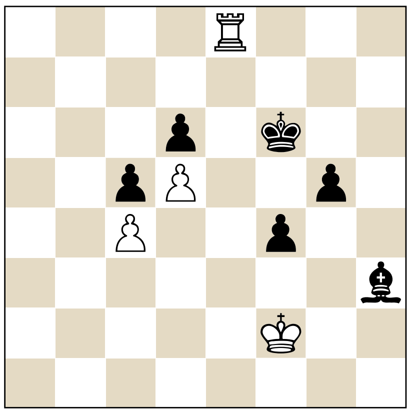


48...♗g4 This felt wrong somehow, because the bishop is blocking the pawns, but either way it is not easy for Black to improve the position. After 48...g4 49.♖e7+ ♔d4 50.♖e6 g3+ 51.♔g2 White will be able to save the position, since the bishop is really badly placed on h5: 51...♔xc4 52.♖xd6 (52.♖e4+ could also draw, but it is certainly not a cakewalk after 52...♔xd5 53.♖xf4 ♗g6 54.♔xg3 c4) 52...♗f7 53.♖e6!. Yup, this one again! Forcing the black king to take on d5. This motif will repeat itself many times: 53...♔xd5 54.♖f6, and White wins back enough pawns to make a draw.

> 'Definitely one of the most beautiful moves I have ever played! A study-like defence!'

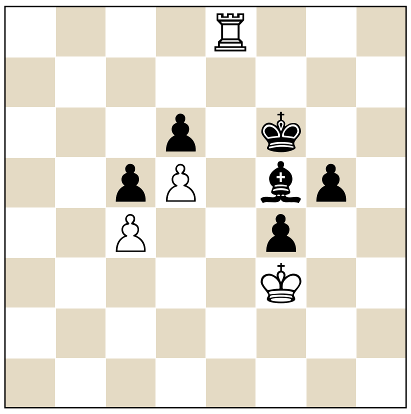
Or 51...♗g4 52.♖xd6 ♔e3 (52...♗f5 53.♖e6! – this trick never gets old – 53...♔xc4 54.♖e5, and the d-pawn advances) 53.♖e6+!. This is the trick that always bails White out: 53...♗xe6 54.dxe6 f3+ 55.♔xg3 f2 56.e7, with a draw.

49.♖e7+ ♔f6 50.♖e8 ♗h3



51.♔f3?! Literally forcing her to improve the placement of the bishop. It was high time to launch the rook attack with 51.♖f8+!, since the bishop is placed on the worst square possible!: 51...♔e5 52.♖e8+ ♔d4 53.♖e6 g4 54.♖xd6 g3+ 55.♔f3 ♗f5 56.♖e6, with an easy draw.

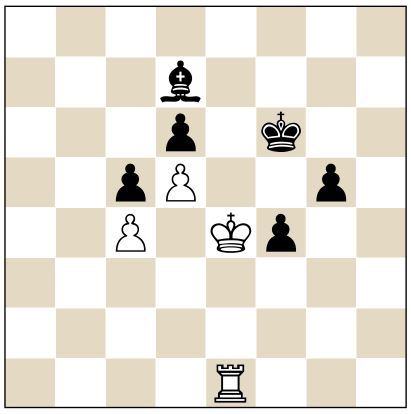
51...♗f5



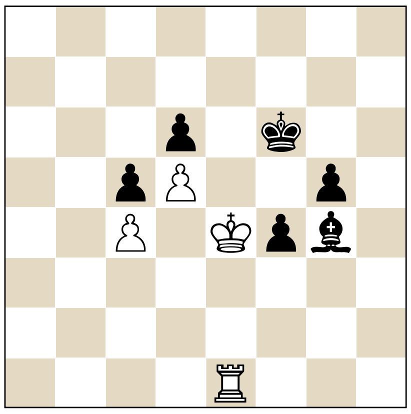
52.♖e1 I need to prevent the king from entering the queenside via e5 since the bishop is really on the best square available. After 52.♖f8+ ♔e5 53.♖e8+ ♔d4 54.♖e6 ♗d3! 55.♖xd6 ♗xc4 Black wins the d5-pawn and is clearly winning here.

52...♗d7! On 52...♗d3 53.♔g4 is the simplest, forcing 53...♗f5+ 54.♔f3 and returning to the game position.

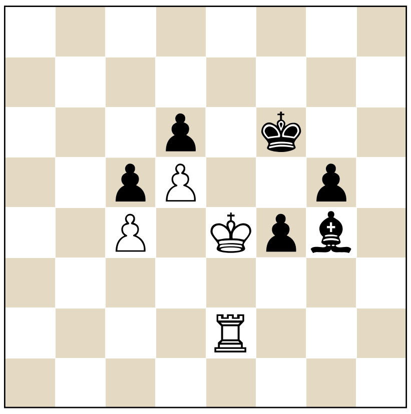
53.♔e4!



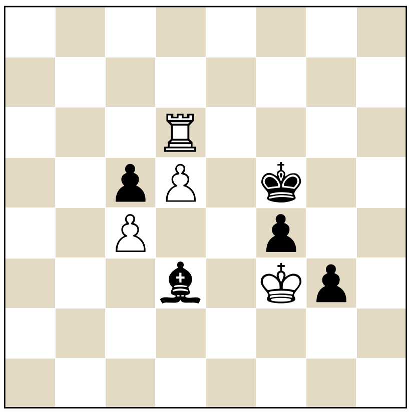
53...♗g4! Catching the king and putting White in a difficult situation since moving the rook from the e-file would allow the penetration of the black king. Also, moving the king to d3 away from the kingside pawns cannot be a good idea! So once you put through all these things you come upon...



54.♖e2!! Definitely one of the most beautiful moves I have ever played! A study-like defence! Also, and importantly, I keep control of the e5-square. 54...♗xe2 is one of the prettiest stalemate positions I have ever seen, at least in my games!



54...♗f5+ After 54...♗h5, 55.♖e1 maintains the position.
Black's last winning chance was 54...♗h3! 55.♔f3 ♔f5 56.♖e6. Since the bishop is badly placed on h3, it is time to go after the pawns: 56...g4+ 57.♔f2 g3+ 58.♔f3 ♗f1 59.♖xd6. I was confident that this was a draw: 59...♗d3! (or 59...♗xc4 60.♖d8 with a draw)

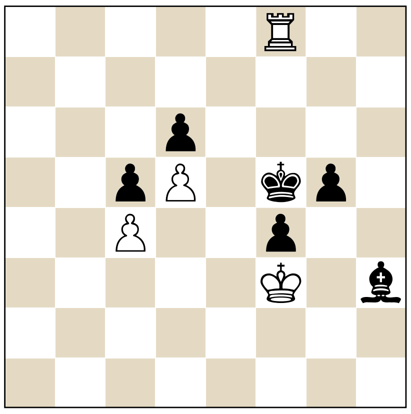


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

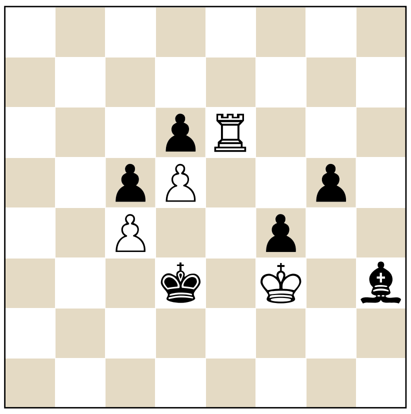
As usual, the comp laughs at my calculations. In my defence, this isn't so easy to see in advance ☺: 60.♖e6 (or 60.♖d8 ♗e4+ 61.♔e2 f3+ 62.♔e3 f2 63.♖f8+ ♔e5, winning) 60...♗xc4, and Black wins.
55.♔f3 ♗h3 56.♖e8!
Back again.
56...♔f5 57.♖f8+!
I decided to continue to push the king further away from the kingside pawns.

NEW IN CHESS

After Nino Batsiashvili's draw against Magnus Carlsen in Qatar, Adhiban should have been warned.



57...♔e5 58.♖e8+ ♔d4 59.♖e4+! An important intermezzo, pushing the king further away from the d5-pawn! **59...♔d3! 60.♖e6**



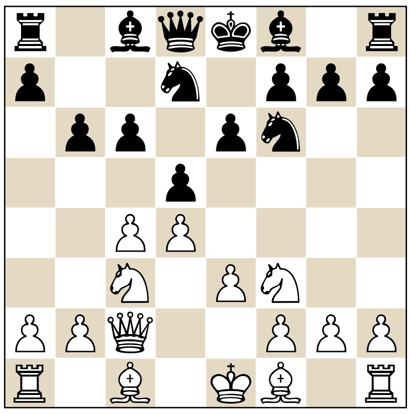
60...♔xc4 I was surprised to see this, since I felt there was still a lot to play for. More persistent was 60...♗f5 61.♖xd6 ♗e4+ 62.♔f2. Anyway, the g5-pawn can be taken by the rook and the king needs to be near the c-pawn to stop it: 62...♔xc4 63.♖d7! ♗xd5 64.♖g7 ♔d4 65.♖xg5. This endgame, although dangerous, looked like my best chance. The rest of the line is the usual computer awesomeness: 65...c4 66.♖g4! ♔e4 67.♔e2! c3 68.♖xf4+! ♔xf4 69.♔d3, with a draw.
61.♖xd6 ♔d4 62.♖g6 ♔xd5
Draw. Another easy draw was 62...g4+ 63.♔xf4 ♔xd5 64.♔e3.

At the start of the last round Dreev and I were leading with 8½ points, and a draw would give me the title thanks to my better tiebreak. I firmly told myself: 'This is my year and I am gonna win this one against all odds, be it illness, mental fatigue or psychological barriers!' I was facing off against Sam Sevian and Dreev was playing Miguoel Admiraal. I wanted a fighting game, so I went for the Najdorf. My opponent went for a new idea, but I reacted well and got a very promising position. But he defended tenaciously with an exchange sacrifice and managed to create a kind of barrier. Luckily for me, however, Admiraal played a great game against Dreev. He was never in danger of losing and achieved a comfortable draw. By that time it was becoming pretty clear that I couldn't break through my opponent's defences, so I offered a draw, which was promptly accepted. And just like that I had qualified for the Tata Steel Masters 2017!

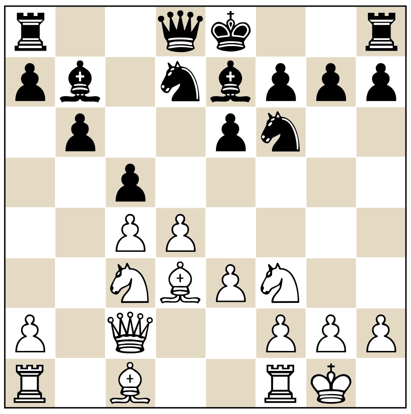
NOTES BY
Adhiban Baskaran

SL 8.3 – D45
Adhiban Baskaran
Alexey Dreev
Wijk aan Zee 2016 (7)

This game was one of my favourites in the event.
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 e6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♕c2 b6

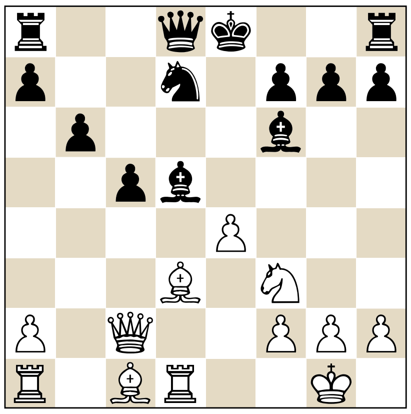


Dreev is the one of biggest experts in this line, so I was very eager to face off against the best one in the business.
7.♗d3 ♗b7 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.b3 dxc4 10.bxc4 c5



Dreev was sharing the lead, so I didn't expect him to go for this line, since there was a certain degree of risk (for both sides actually), but I was hoping there would be more risk for Black.
11.d5 exd5 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 ♗xd5 14.♖d1 ♗f6 15.e4!?

My stunning novelty, which I had found in 2014 but had never had a chance to use yet! I spent most of my prep time on this, since it was very interesting and at the same time somewhat risky for White!



15...c4 A typical human reaction, but unfortunately White has many good ways to continue.
After 15...♗xa1 16.exd5, due to the pressure on h7 Black can't castle and the resulting position is very interesting. The presence of the two bishops

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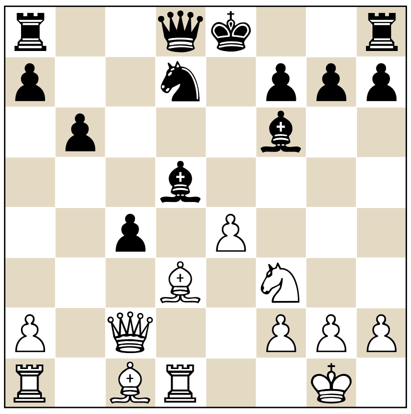
fully compensates for the material deficit.

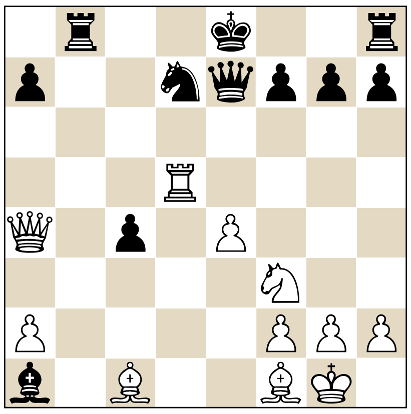
Another possibility was 15...♗c6 16.e5! ♗xf3 17.exf6 ♗xd1 18.fxg7 ♖g8 19.♕xd1, with a crazy position and once again good compensation from the exposed king.



16.♗e2!

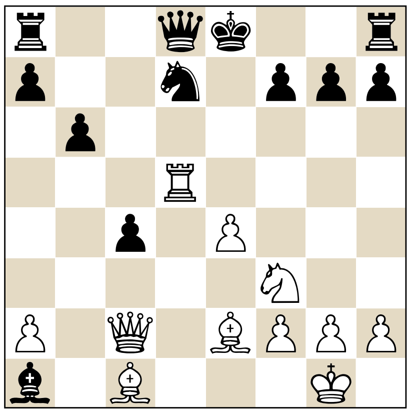
The other refutation was 16.♗xc4! (which I only found after playing 16.♗e2, which was fortunate, since the game continuation looked stronger in a practical game) 16...♗xc4 17.e5!. Black is too late to coordinate his forces: 17...♘xe5 18.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19.♗a3! (19.♘xe5 ♗xe5 gives Black more chances of survival) 19...♘xf3+ 20.gxf3 ♗xa1 21.♕xc4. Now the black king comes under a nasty attack: 21...♔d7 22.♕f4! ♗f6 23.♕d6+ ♔c8 24.♕c6+ ♔b8 25.♗d6+ ♖xd6 26.♕xd6+, with a winning endgame.

For some reason I rejected 16.♗f1!?, but sometimes the bishop would be better on f1: 16...♗xa1 17.♖xd5. This also looks pretty good. One sample line would be 17...♕e7 18.♕a4 b5 19.♕xb5 ♖b8 20.♕a4 and here 20...♖b1 is totally toothless, which in turn gives White a large advantage compared to the game continuation.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

16...♗xa1 17.♖xd5

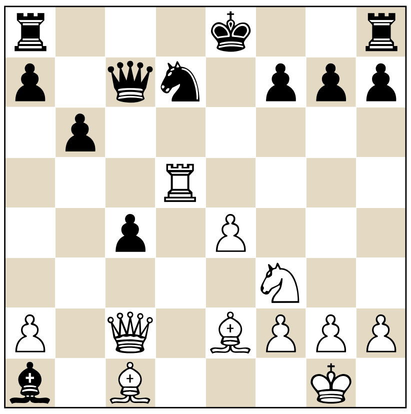


17...♕c7

Trying to get the king to the queenside, but unfortunately it won't be safe there either!

I was more concerned about 17...♕e7 18.♕a4 (my intention during the game. The comp's suggestion is 18.♗g5! ♗f6 19.♗f4!, a cool retreat after which White gains the upper hand) 18...b5 (otherwise Black will be crushed) 19.♖xb5 (after 19.♕xb5 ♖b8 20.♕a4 ♖b1 21.♕c2 ♖b7 Black is holding on) 19...0-0 20.♗a3 ♕xe4 21.♗xc4. This position I felt should be something like a slight white edge/equal, but with some chances for a pull due to my active pieces and the vulnerable f7-spot.

17...♖c8 can be met strongly by 18.♗a3!.



18.♗a3!

The only way to both prevent 0-0-0 and keep the initiative running.

Adhiban Baskaran

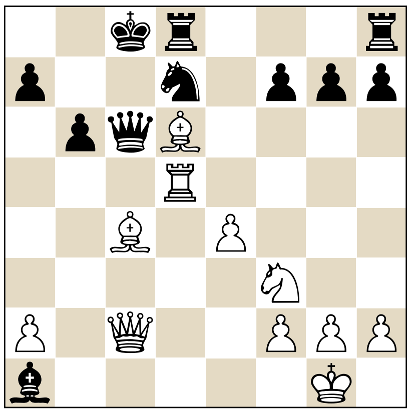
Born: August 15, 1992,
Mayiladuthurai, India
Peak rating: 2674 (Sept. 2015)

Career highlights

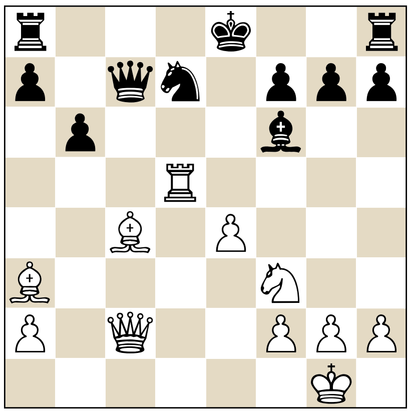
2007 and 2008:	First board of the winning Indian team in the World Youth Olympiad
2008:	World U-16 Champion
2009:	Indian Champion
2010:	Bronze medal with India at World Teams
2013:	Runner-up Indian Championship
2013:	Reaches 3rd round in World Cup
2013:	Wins Barcelona Open
2014:	Silver Medal in Asian Continental Championship
2014:	Wins Biel Open
2014:	Bronze medal with Indian team at Tromsø Olympiad
2015:	Wins Benasque Open
2015:	Ties for first in Biel Open
2015:	Ties for first in Baku Open
2016:	Wins Tata Steel Challengers

Adhiban in Madame Tussauds Amsterdam, contemplating his next step after the 2017 Masters.

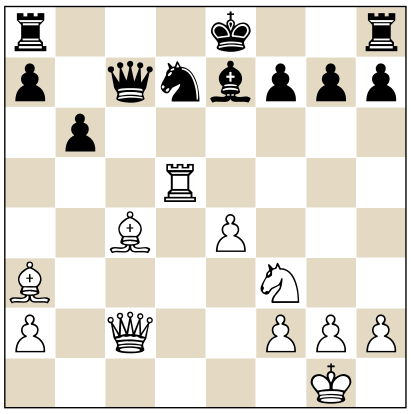
18...♗f6
After this I knew I should be clearly better, but it is hard to give Black any good advice.
After 18...♘c5 19.♗xc5! bxc5 20.♕a4+ ♔e7 21.♕xc4 White's initiative is just too strong!: 21...♖ac8 22.♕c1 ♗d4 23.♘xd4 cxd4 24.♕a3+ ♔e6 25.♗c4!, and Black is lost.
After 18...0-0-0 White plays 19.♗d6! ♕c6 20.♗xc4


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

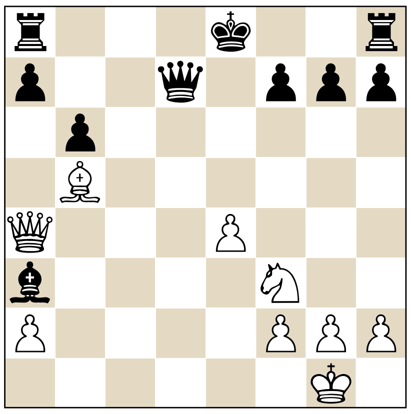
with the devastating threat of 21.♗a6+. 20...b5 21.♗xb5! ♕xc2 22.♗a6 is a nice mate showing the dominating power of the bishop.
19.♗xc4!



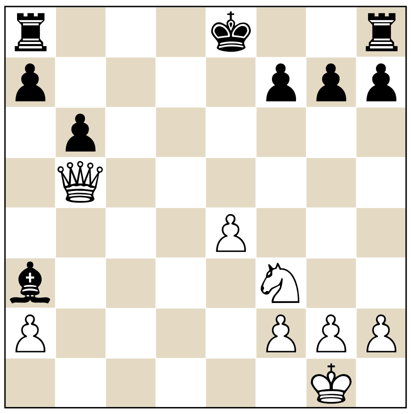
19...♗e7
On 19...♖c8 20.♕a4! is the strongest, with no hope of survival for Black since 20...♗e7 is met by 21.♖e5.
20.♗b5 looked pretty awesome, but Black has an escape!: 20...a6! (20...♕xc2 loses to 21.♗xd7+ ♔d8 22.♗a4+ ♔c7 23.♗xc2) 21.♖xd7 ♕xc2 22.♖e7+ ♔d8 23.♖d7+, with a funny repetition.



20.♕a4!
This was my original intention, but I almost left it due to one line which was troubling me (22...0-0-0). However, then a thunderbolt struck me!
20...♗xa3 21.♖xd7 ♕xd7 22.♗b5



22...♕xb5
Indeed, 22...0-0-0! was the only way, but after 23.♗xd7+ ♖xd7 24.♘e5! was the thunderbolt: 24...♖d2 25.♔f1!? (since Black can't prevent ♕c6+ anyway) 25...♗c5 26.♕c6+ ♔b8 27.♘d7+ ♖xd7 28.♕xd7 g6 29.f4, with a winning advantage.
24.♕c6+ ♔d8 is not clear (24...♖c7 25.♕a8+ ♔d7 26.♘e5+ ♔d6 (26...♔e7 loses to 27.♘c6+, closing the c-file and winning one of the rooks) 27.♕d5+, winning).
23.♕xb5+



23...♔f8? A better try was 23...♔e7!? 24.♕e5+ ♔f8 25.♕d5 ♖c8!. Somehow I had just overlooked this move in my calculations, but 26.g3! is just winning anyway, since Black will be unable to defend against the knight jumps: 26...h6 (or 26...f6 27.♘d4) 27.♘e5, winning.
24.♕b3!
A simple double attack: Black can't protect both the bishop and the vulnerable f7-spot.
24...♗d6 25.♘g5
Black resigned. ■

Wijk aan Zee 2016 – Challengers cat. XIII

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		TPR
1	Adhiban Baskaran	IGM	IND	2653	*	1	1	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	9	2703
2	Eltaj Safarli	IGM	AZE	2653	0	*	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	9	2703
3	Aleksey Dreev	IGM	RUS	2644	0	½	*	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	9	2704
4	Benjamin Bok	IGM	NED	2607	½	0	0	*	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	7	2595
5	Mikhail Antipov	IGM	RUS	2567	½	0	0	½	*	½	1	½	1	0	0	1	1	1	7	2598
6	Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	IGM	GER	2679	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	6½	2560
7	Jorden van Foreest	IM	NED	2541	1	0	½	1	0	½	*	0	1	1	0	0	½	1	6½	2571
8	Nijat Abasov	IGM	AZE	2556	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	*	½	0	1	0	½	1	6½	2570
9	Erwin l'Ami	IGM	NED	2627	½	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	*	1	½	½	1	1	6½	2564
10	Samuel Sevian	IGM	USA	2578	½	0	0	½	1	½	0	1	0	*	1	1	0	1	6½	2568
11	Ju Wenjun	IGM	CHN	2548	0	½	0	0	1	½	1	0	½	0	*	½	1	1	6	2541
12	Nino Batsiashvili	IM	GEO	2485	½	0	0	½	0	0	1	1	½	0	½	*	1	0	5	2488
13	Miguoel Admiraal	IM	NED	2441	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	1	0	0	*	1	4½	2469
14	Anne Haast	WGM	NED	2391	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	*	2	2287

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Recommended: *PC Intel i7 (Quadcore), 4 GB RAM, Windows 8.1/10, DirectX10, 512 MB graphics card, 100% DirectX10-compatible sound card, Windows Media Player 11, DVD-ROM drive and Internet access for program activation, access to Playchess.com, Let's Check and program updates.*

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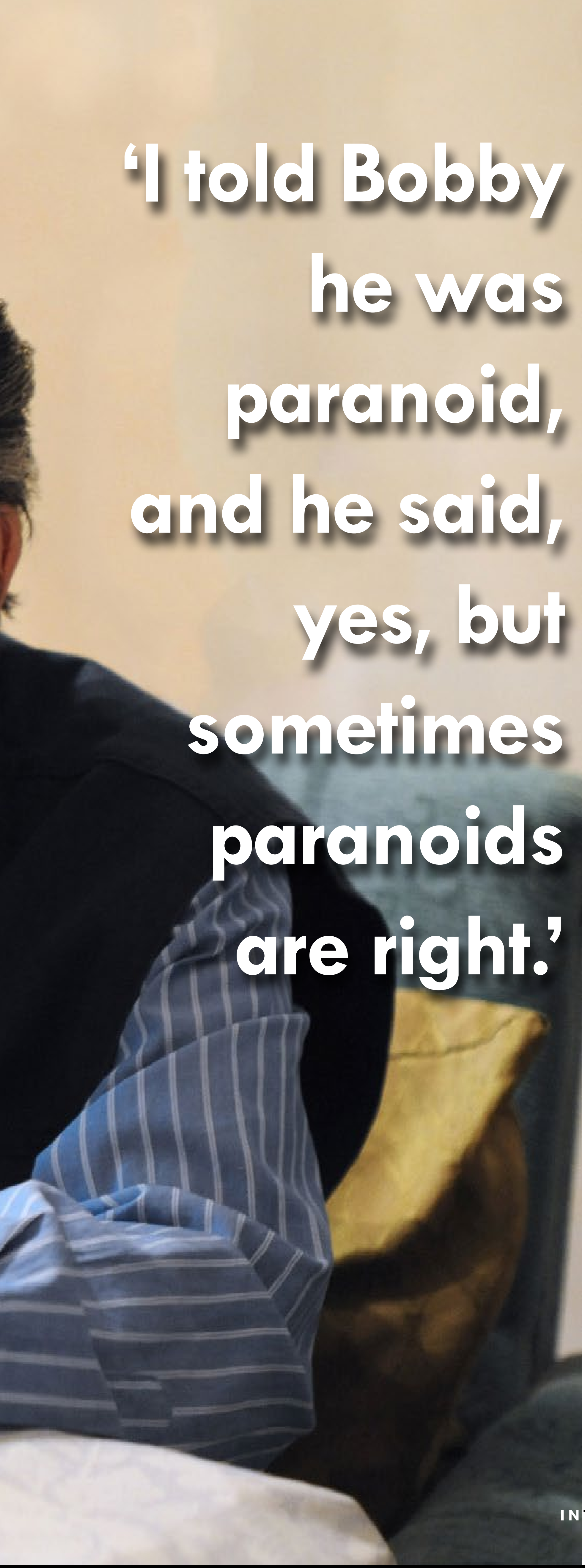
‘The next day it said in the newspaper that a chess master had proven stronger than the boxing champion. I didn’t know he was a boxer. It was good that I grabbed him and didn’t try to punch him.’

NEW IN CHESS



‘I told Bobby he was paranoid, and he said, yes, but sometimes paranoids are right.’

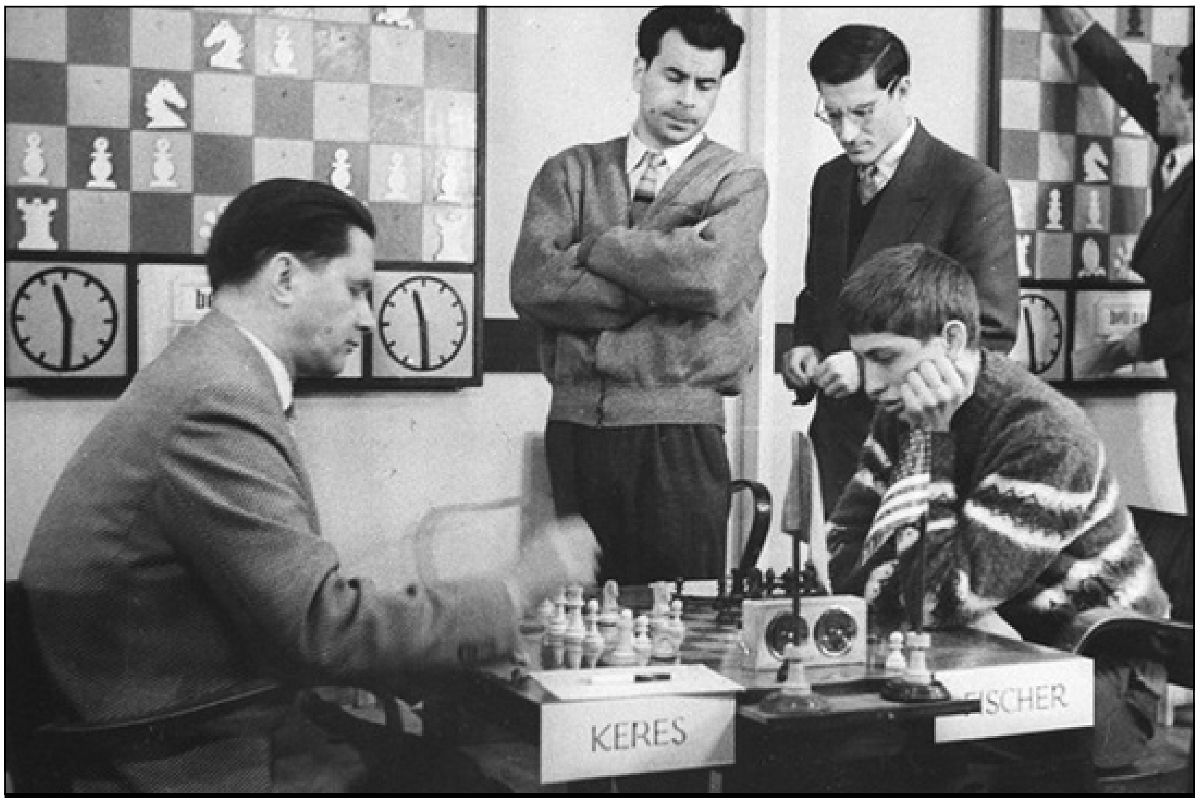
In 1962, at the Candidates’ tournament in Curaçao, Pal Benko slapped 19-year-old Bobby Fischer in an impulse that he would regret for the rest of his life. Miraculously, the incident did not destroy their friendship, which lasted for half a century. Till the end of his life, Fischer continued to revere, admire and respect Benko, perhaps as the father figure he missed so badly. He even let him invest his money. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** travelled to Budapest to talk to the man who knew Bobby Fischer better than anyone else.

In the doorway between the hall and the living-room of the Benkos, two gymnastics rings are suspended. Not a sight you’d expect to see in the house of an elderly couple. Pal Benko says he hasn’t used them recently because of a small injury he incurred some time ago. He says it in a tone that suggests that he would probably still use them if it hadn’t been for that silly accident.

‘I was always strong. As a young man I worked in construction for some time, carrying up heavy materials. I am 87 now. I still have my chest muscles and you can feel my arm.' He flexes his biceps and invitingly turns his bent arm in my direction. He smiles when I acknowledge that his biceps are still round and hard as an unripe apple. 'In Novi Sad (in 1990) at the Olympiad I showed Anand that I was still good at arm wrestling. He brought over an older Indian player, around 30, and I beat him while I was more than twice his age.'

Another story that he even relishes more takes us back to the days when he was 20 and a young aspiring chess player. 'I went to the beach with a very nice girl. We were sitting there and two guys walked up and one of them started pushing me. I was sitting with my back to him. At first I didn't react, but when he pushed me into the water I grabbed him and held him in my elbow. The water was shallow there, but I put his face in the water so he could not breathe. People came up to us and so did a policeman and I was taken to the police office. The next day it said in the newspaper that a chess master had proven stronger than the boxing champion. I didn't know he was a boxer. It was good that I grabbed him and didn't try to punch him.'

But there is one 'physical' story that he doesn't take any pride in at all. At the 1962 Candidates' tournament in Curaçao, he hit Bobby Fischer in an argument over the services of Arthur Bisguier, who Benko believed was there to help both American participants. 'Look, actually it was a misunderstanding. There was this great guy in the federation, Morris Kasper, who was giving money, as the US government was giving nothing. But he had money for only one second. He told me, if Fischer has an adjourned game, Bisguier will work with him. But if Bobby doesn't need him, you can use him. That was OK with me, Bobby was the big star. But Kasper didn't tell Bobby about this arrangement. So the tournament starts. I beat Fischer, Tal, and I am in first place after the first leg and I have an adjourned game with Petrosian. And I ask Bisguier, come on let's analyse my game. 'No!' Bobby said, 'I forbid it. No way Bisguier is going to help you.' I called him a selfish pig and he said some nasty things to me. And I told him, don't repeat that, but he repeated it and I hit him. The next day I regretted it and from that moment onwards I could not play against him anymore. I knew that he was mentally ill and that I should not have hit him.'



Portoroz 1958. Pal Benko watches Paul Keres and 15-year-old Bobby Fischer.
'I told him, you can't dress like that all the time if you want to get some respect.'

The house of Pal and Gizella Benko lies in a green residential area of Budapest. It has been their home ever since they got married. 'Ziki' attracted Pal's attention when as a young girl she was the only one to beat David Bronstein in a simul. Later he also saw her draw in a simul against Paul Keres. After Pal had emigrated to the United States in 1957, he wrote her letters and included problems and studies that Ziki, who went on to become a university professor in mathematics, solved together with her students. They married in 1968. 'When I was getting close to 40, I remembered that I had promised myself that I should get married before I was 40, and one month before my 40th birthday we got married. But she wanted to stay here; she liked it here and had her work. So I would spend half of the year in the States and half a year here, depending on my permits. This was tough for her.' As Pal says this with a solemn look, Ziki, who is working at her computer in the adjoining room, lets out a laugh and retorts: 'Oh, and it was not tough for him! Haha, don't believe it.' They got a son and a daughter, who both became mathematicians. They have one grandson who, much to Ziki's regret, doesn't play chess.

My meeting with Pal Benko has been arranged by David DeLucia, the American collector whose amazing Fischer collection is shown and described in the monumental book *Bobby Fischer – Triumph and Despair*. Over the past years, whenever we talked about Fischer, inevitably the moment would come when David would say: 'You should interview Pal. There is no one who knew Bobby better than Pal.' And he'd explain how Bobby looked up to Pal and trusted him – to the extent that he even let him invest his money. If there had ever been a father figure in Fischer's life, it had been Pal Benko.

Benko and Fischer first met at the Interzonal in Portoroz, Yugoslavia, in 1958. Benko liked the lanky 15-year-old kid and gave him his first piece of advice. 'He was only wearing one sweater. I told him, you can't dress like that all the time if you want to get some respect. You can't show up like that in an international tournament, you are not a child anymore. And I took him to a tailor, a Hungarian tailor I knew in New York. After that he got only tailor-made suits. Once he said, you know, I have more suits than Kennedy.'

'I liked the way he played chess. And he was correct at the chess board. Of course he had his stupid ideas, he was a hopeless case, but he hardly talked about them at the time. His mental problems already showed when he was very young. He was 16 when we were training at Grossinger's, a luxurious hotel with all facilities outside New York. And he showed me a photo of Hitler and said that he thought he was a great guy. And I said, yes, what a great guy. Look at the map of Europe and see how Germany is divided, what a great guy that he achieved that. Then later he got his doubts and was no longer convinced that Hitler was such a great guy. And he believed that maybe he was a Jew. Some people think he picked up these ideas later, but it was already then. He could not escape from the stuff he had in his head. I have no idea where it came from, I am not a psychiatrist. I told him, you are paranoid, and he said, yes, but sometimes paranoids are right.'

Pal Benko

Born: July 14, 1928, in Amiens, France

Career highlights

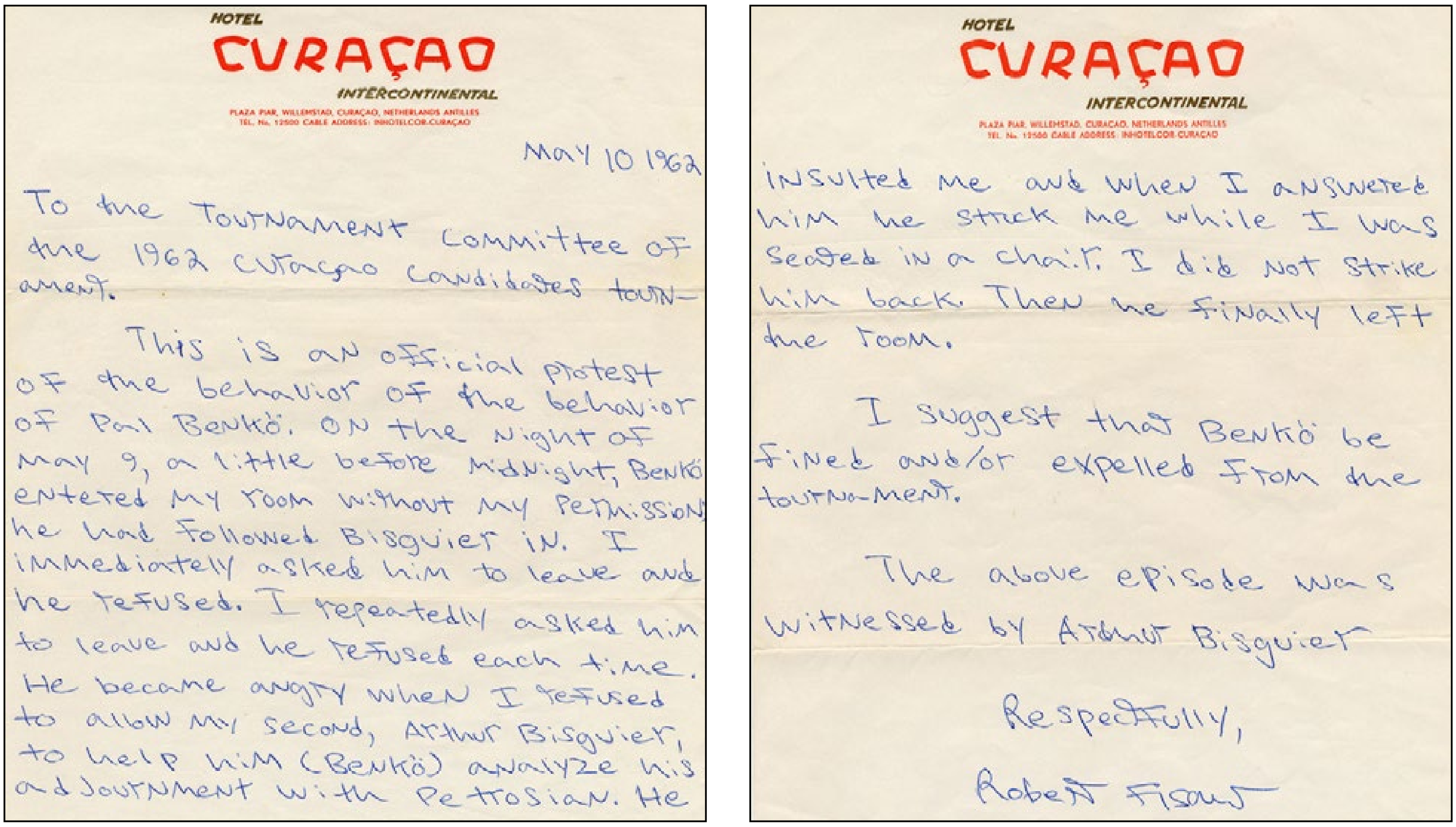
1948: Hungarian Champion
1950: International Master
1958: International Grandmaster
1959: Candidates' tournament Bled, Zagreb & Belgrade – 8th
1961: US Open Champion: he also won the title in 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1969, 1974 and 1975
1962: Candidates' tournament Curaçao – 6th
1962: Varna Olympiad, silver on Board 2
1964: Canadian Open Champion
1966: Havana Olympiad, silver with US team

Benko defeated four World Champions: Smyslov, Petrosian, Tal and Fischer

Ziki and Pal Benko on the day they celebrated the 60th anniversary of their first meeting.

The young Bobby Fischer saw Benko, who was 15 years older, as a man of the world, who was successful in areas that he could only dream of. 'He had seen that I was doing quite well financially and concluded that this could not be only because of what I made with chess. And he said, you must be a CIA agent. And I laughed and said that it would be wonderful if they hired me. I worked on Wall Street for two years after my arrival in the United States, because I had to make money. First I did clerk work, but I used the time to see what was going on there and learned more about the stock market, and I took a broker examination. And I bought some stocks and did well. When Bobby won all this money in Yugoslavia with his second match against Spassky, I told him he should invest part of it. And advised him. Nothing special, just some solid stocks.' Benko smiles at a related memory: 'Once he came to me and said he had had an offer from someone who traded in custom-made stocks. Custom-made stocks, I just laughed.'

Fischer also looked up to Benko the ladies' man and once told him that he wanted to be an international playboy just like him. 'He was always interested in girls. No, not only Asian girls



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May 10 1962

To the Tournament Committee of the 1962 Curaçao Candidates tournament.

This is an official protest of the behavior of the behavior of Pal Benkö. On the night of May 9, a little before midnight, Benkö entered my room without my permission. he had followed Bisguier in. I immediately asked him to leave and he refused. I repeatedly asked him to leave and he refused each time. He became angry when I refused to allow my second, Arthur Bisguier, to help him (Benkö) analyze his adjournment with Petrosian. He

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insulted me and when I answered him he struck me while I was seated in a chair. I did not strike him back. Then he finally left the room.

I suggest that Benkö be fined and/or expelled from the tournament.

The above episode was witnessed by Arthur Bisguier

Respectfully,

Robert Fischer

COLLECTION DAVID DELUCIA

The letter that Bobby Fischer sent to the tournament committee in Curaçao asking (in vain) that Pal Benko be expelled from the tournament.

(laughs), all girls. But he didn't know how to go about it. That's how he lost his virginity, in Argentina in 1960. He saw that I had a very nice and beautiful girlfriend during the tournament, 'a high-quality girl', as he put it, a Hungarian émigrée. He wanted to know how I did that. In the end, Larry Evans found him a girl. He said she was 'semi-professional' (laughs). The next morning I asked Bobby how it had been. He said, mwah, just some up and down, chess was better. I told him, look Bobby, sex and chess are two different things.'

'In Portoroz a girl came into his room to ask for an autograph, when he was still in bed. He didn't know what to do and asked me, Pal, what should I have done?' Benko looks at me, shrugs his shoulders and just smiles with a telling expression on his face.

But Fischer also loved the problems and studies that Benko had started composing at an early age to become the most prolific composer among grandmasters in the world. 'He would ask for them. When we arrived in Lugano for the Olympiad (in 1968), I gave him a study that I made when I was 15. Mate in three. Many players had had difficulty solving it. I gave him one hour to solve it and he couldn't. But he kept thinking about it that night and finally found the solution. But then he claimed that there must be a second solution, which lost him another bet. The next day he left Lugano and refused to play, unhappy with the playing circumstances.'

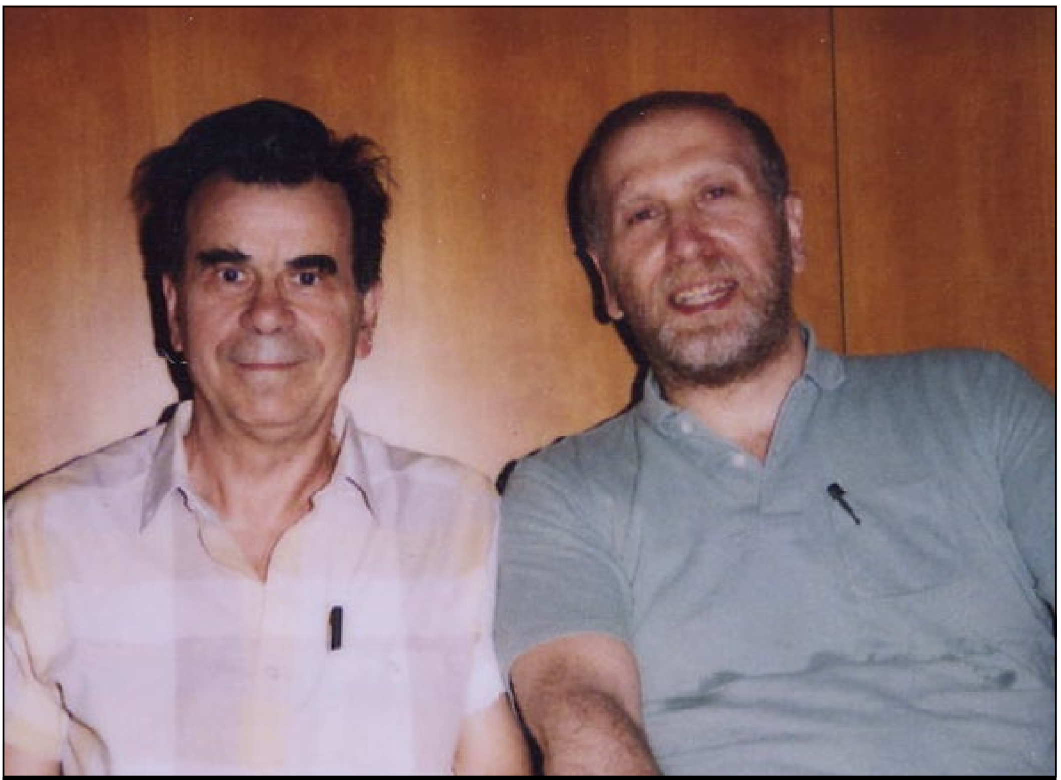
Pal Benko played a pivotal role in one of the most crucial moments of Fischer's career. In 1970 he gave up his place in the Palma de Mallorca Interzonal to Fischer, who had not qualified and threatened to miss his chance to play for the World Championship. Mallorca was the beginning of Fischer's legendary campaign that was followed by his demolition of Taimanov, Larsen and Petrosian in three memorable matches and ended with his victory over Spassky in 1972. Benko is still happy about his decision, but resents a detail he has heard too often. 'The story that I got money to give up my place for the Interzonal is total nonsense. I didn't get any money for that. What happened is that there was 2000 dollars for each of the American participants. I was already past my prime and believed that Bobby had a chance, that he could beat all those guys. And so I was ready to give up my place. But I wanted to go there, because you never knew if he really was going to show up. And if he didn't show up, I wanted to play, of course. So I was there and when he arrived I said to the federation guys, why don't you pay me these 2000 dollars to help the two other players? And that was the money I got.' Matter-of-factly, as if this is how things sometimes go, he adds: 'Many years later there was a moment when Fischer asked about the money I got and wondered if I had gotten money that in fact I had no right to.'

Before the match in Reykjavik, they talked about the possibility of Benko going there as Fischer's second, but nothing came of it. 'But I did give him advice when he went to play Spassky. Don't try to win every game if you are leading, and change the openings. I know you very well, you play 1.d4 and 1.c4, you know that too. Because we had analysed together. Once we analysed the Grünfeld together and much later he asked me if I remembered one line. And I said, you remember it, I have long forgotten even though it is my opening. He didn't play it, but he knew better than me. And I said, stop playing 1.e4, and that's what he did. I didn't become his second, but I told him what to do. And he did all this.'

About his own overall score against Fischer, Benko is not too happy, to put it mildly. 'I played 18 games with Fischer. I won three games, but he won eight. After I got into this incident with him in Curaçao, I couldn't play with him anymore. My conscience. In Curaçao, terrible, I could mate him by force and I lost that game. A perpetual I could have had at any time. Our game (in Round 8) in Curacao showed that he was not in good form. I told him after the game that it was a draw and he said, you never had a draw. And I immediately showed to him 19...♗xb2+, and if he wants to get out of the checks he will lose the game. And he said, huh, huh, I didn't see it. He thought he'd played great chess.

'The last time I played with him, in the US Championship in New York in 1966, I had a winning game. An exchange up, good position, and he made a move that I had not expected. I started calculating the variation and stopped. I could not accept this. I thought I had a good game. If I have a good position, my opponent can't have good moves. I was upset how I lost this game and suddenly I looked one move further and he is dead lost. The next round he walks into the Manhattan Chess Club, celebrating. Oh what a great game he played, sacrificed the exchange blabla. I said, you were lost. Huh, huh, lost, show it to me. OK, and he sees that he was lost. Not just a better game, but a forced win.'

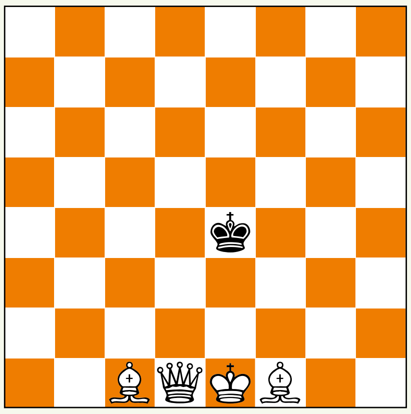
Although they stayed in touch during Fischer's 'wilderness years' and Benko

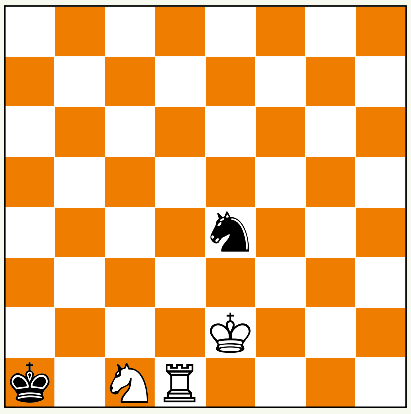

COLLECTION DAVID DELUCIA

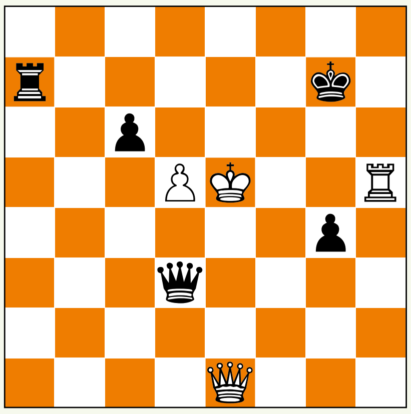
Thirty-one years on and no hard feelings. Pal Benko and Bobby Fischer are having a good time in Budapest.

Studies and Problems

Pal Benko has been composing endgame studies and chess problems ever since he was 15. To this day he is a prolific composer. At our request Benko selected his three favourites. The first problem is the one Fischer had trouble with in Lugano (see interview). The second is a helpmate that proved too difficult for Fischer, Botvinnik, Keres and Geller! Finally, there is the endgame study that he considers his best.


1. Chess Life 1968
White mates in three


2. Berliner Morgenpost 1970
Helpmate in three (Black to move)


3. First/second prize Magyar Sakkelet 2000
White to move and win

(Solutions: see next page)

solutions

from page 61

1. Chess Life 1968

White mates in three

1.♗c4 ♔e5 After 1...♔f5 both 2.♕f3+ and 2.♕h5+ do the trick. **2.♕d5+ ♔f6 3.♕g5** Mate.

2. Berliner Morgenpost 1970

Helpmate in three (Black to move)

If it was White to move, several corner mates would be possible. With Black to move, the mate in three is only possible in the middle of the board, which baffled many strong players.

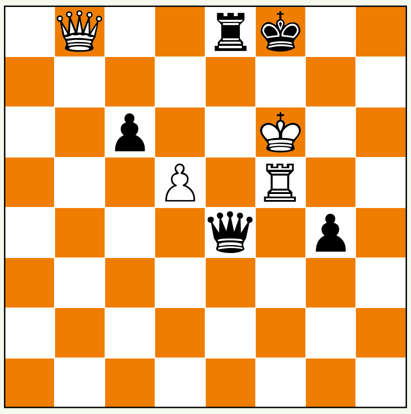
1.♔b2! ♖d5 2.♔c3 ♖c5+ 3.♔d4 ♘b3 Mate.

3. First/second prize

Magyar Sakkelet 2000

White to move and win

1.♖g5+ ♔f8 Or 1...♔h8 2.♕h1+ ♖h7 3.♕a1 ♖g7 4.♖h5+ ♔g8 5.♕a8+ ♔f7 6.♖f5+ and wins. **2.♕b4+** After 2.♕f2+ Black saves himself with 2...♖f7 3.♕c5+ ♖e7+ 4.♔f6 ♕h7. **2...♖e7+ 3.♔f6 ♕e4** If 3...♕h7 4.♖g8+ ♔xg8 5.♕b8 mates. **4.♖h5! ♕f3+ 5.♖f5 ♕e4 6.♕b8+ ♖e8**



7.♕c7! This quiet move keeps the attack going. **7...♖e7** Or 7...♕e7+ 8.♔g6+ ♔g8 9.♖e5!! and White wins. **8.♕c8+ ♖e8 9.♔g6+ ♔g8 10.♕c7! ♖e7** And not 10...♕e7 11.♖e5!!. **11.♕d8+ ♖e8 12.♕h4! ♕e7** Or 12...♖e7 13.♕f6 and wins. **13.♖f8+!! 1-0**

Black can accept the rook sacrifice in three different ways, but all lead to mate.

visited him in Los Angeles ('Getting to him was like in a spy movie. I was picked up by a car, had to change cars on the way, crazy stuff.'), their friendship was only properly resumed when Fischer came to live in Budapest in the mid-1990s after his second match against Spassky. By then, Benko had permanently returned to the Hungarian capital and they spent a lot of time together. Fischer's paranoia had clearly grown worse. 'He was always changing hotels to shake off the Mossad. There was always the craziness and his ideas. But for the rest it was fine. Whenever he would start about his ideas, I would say, let's talk about something interesting and switch to chess. A hopeless case, but otherwise he was normal. So I accepted him as a sick man. That's why I accepted everything.'

> 'I told him that he was going to be okay, but he said, no, I am going to die.'

As Ziki serves more tea and Hungarian sweets, Pal tells some more 'Bobby stories'. 'He was always afraid that there was a "click" somewhere, a camera. We went to a Chinese restaurant and suddenly he cringed as he heard a click. It was the owner who was taking photos of his restaurant, because he wanted to send them to his family back home. But Bobby didn't believe that. I told the owner that he was a famous person and that he didn't want to be photographed. (Smiles) So when we left, the owner asked him for an autograph! But this only confirmed Bobby's suspicions and he refused.'

'Likewise we were invited by Tatai, the Italian master. He had married a rich wife and they invited us to stay in their hotel in the north of Italy. Bobby, my wife and I, with a driver I have here in Budapest. We stayed there for a week and were treated like royalty. When we left, Tatai's wife asked to take a photo of all of us and Bobby flatly refused. Why he was so against photos, I don't know. It may have been his paranoia, that the Mossad was following him. And we should not forget that he was always afraid that someone would make money out of him. Maybe he was afraid that they would sell the photos.'

'We would go out for dinner regularly. And sometimes we went to a night club, but not often. He didn't like the loud music. We'd walk in somewhere and he'd say, nah, and walk out. He was very sensitive about that. There was a club here close by and sometimes I gave the owner some money to turn down the music. But I would also take him to the opera. He had a good ear for music and he enjoyed that.'

'When I played in a German team, Augsburg, he always came with me, but didn't mingle with the chess players. He slept in the hotel. I finished, I went to see him, and after that we went shopping. Made in Germany was all he trusted. And everything had to be wool and cotton. Clothes, shoes, as long as they were made in Germany.'

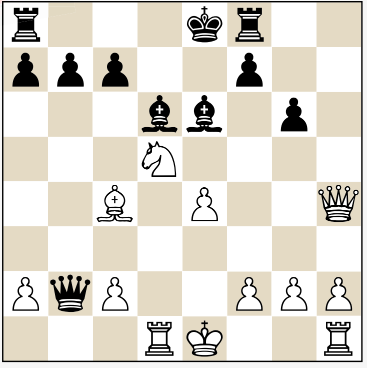
When I tell Pal that when I went to Iceland in 2008, after Fischer's death, to meet the people he had known there, and that I asked all of them if he ever gave them anything, he starts nodding. 'No, that's what he would never do. He gave me some chess books, but nothing else. But if we went out for dinner or when we were in Germany together, he would always pay for me. I paid for my wife, but he would always pay for me.'

The last time he spoke to Fischer was two or three weeks before his death. 'I was surprised to hear that he was in hospital. I told him that he was going to be okay, but he said, no, I am going to die. He sounded depressed. When I learned that he had died, I thought, what a shame. An incredible guy, but sick, terrible. Like Morphy, the pride and sorrow of American chess. Morphy also beat everyone and then stopped playing, just like Fischer.' ■

from page 45

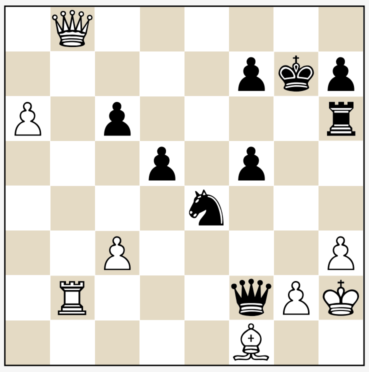
MAXIMize your Tactics

Solutions



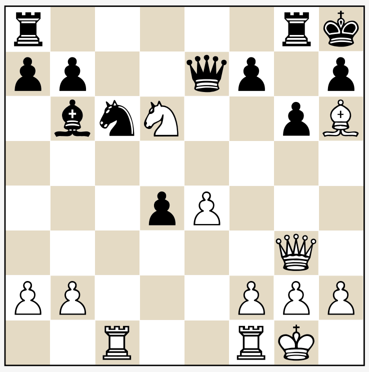
1. Lu Shanglei-Bitoon
Olongapo City 2015

17.♕e7+! ♗xe7 18.♘xc7 Mate. As simple as that. No discovered checks needed!



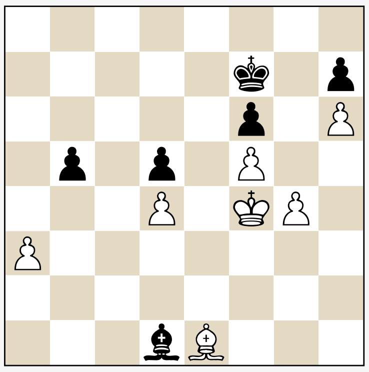
2. Firat-Khairullin
Doha 2015

34...♖xh3+! 35.♔xh3 ♘g5+ White resigned as he is checkmated after 36.♔h2 ♘f3+ 37.♔h1 ♕g1 or 37.♔h3 ♕h4.



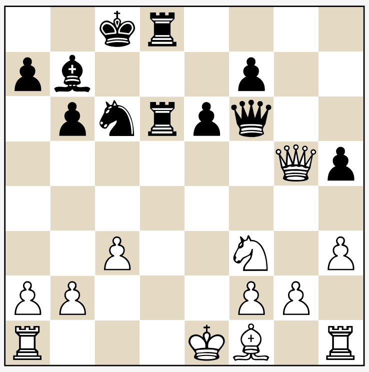
3. Bosiocic-Mons
Austria 2015

22.♖xc6! Gaining sufficient access to the e5-square. **22...bxc6 23.♕e5+! ♕xe5 24.♘xf7** Mate.



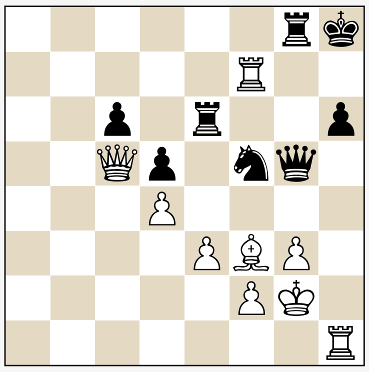
4. Rozentalis-Bruno
Acqui Terme 2015

55.♗h4 ♗c2 56.♗xf6! ♔xf6 57.g5+ ♔f7 58.♔e5 ♗e4 59.g6+! hxg6 59...♔g8 60.♔e6 ♗d3 61.gxh7+ ♔xh7 62.f6 doesn't change much. **60.h7 ♔g7 61.f6+ ♔xh7 62.♔d6 g5 63.f7** Black resigned.



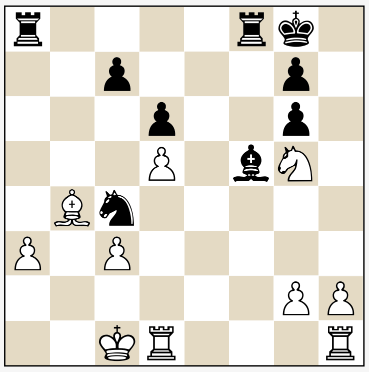
5. Kiewra-Akobian
Orange 2015

17...♘b4! 18.cxb4 If 18.♕xf6 ♘c2+ 19.♔e2 ♗a6+. And 18.♕c1 ♘d3+ 19.♗xd3 ♖xd3 is totally depressing. **18...♖d1+! 19.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 20.♔xd1 ♗xf3+ 21.gxf3 ♕xg5** and White resigned soon after.



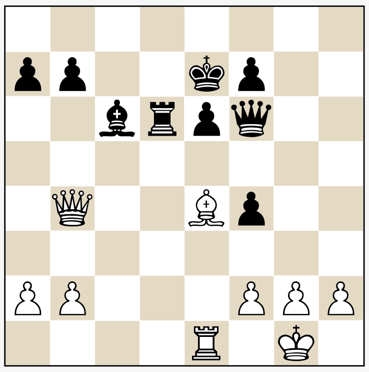
6. Laznicka-Jakubowski
Czech Republic 2015

39...♘xg3! 39...♘xe3+ 40.♔g1. **40.fxg3 ♕xg3+ 41.♔f1 ♕g6! 42.♖f8 ♕d3+! 43.♗e2 ♕b1+** White resigned in view of 44.♔f2 ♕xh1.



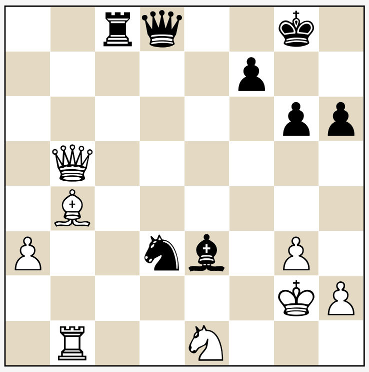
7. Bromberger-Haba
Austria 2015

25...♖xa3! The pawn proves to be essential for the defence while Black doesn't need two rooks to succeed. **26.♗xa3 ♖b8!** An important subtlety. **27.♗b4 ♖a8!** Touchdown. **28.♖he1 ♖a1** Mate.



8. Kovalev-Gajek
Legnica 2015

26...a5! 27.♕xa5 If 27.♕b6, 27...♗xe4 wins a piece. 27.♕c4, 27.♕b3 or 27.♕a3 loses the bishop after 27...♕e5! 28.f3 f5. 27.♕c5 loses in the same way as in the game. **27...♗xe4 28.♖xe4 ♕f5!** and in view of 29.♕c7+ ♖d7 30.♕c2 ♕xe4! White resigned.



9. Cvetkovic-Tosic
Belgrade 2015

41...♖c2+! 42.♘xc2 If 42.♔f3, 42...♘e5+! mating after 43.♔xe3 ♘g4+ 44.♔f3 (44.♔e4 f5+) 44...♖f2+ 45.♔xg4 ♕c8+ or obtaining a decisive advantage after 43.♕xe5 ♗d4!. **42...♕a8+ 43.♔h3** 43.♔f1 ♕f3#. **43...♘f2+ 44.♔h4 ♕d8+** White resigned.

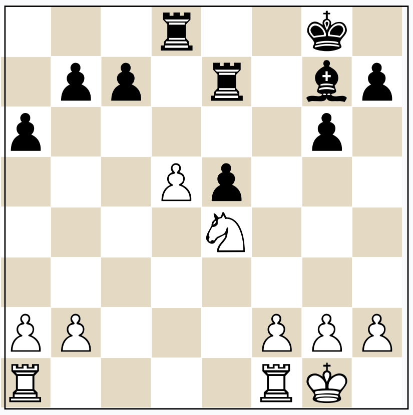
Judit Polgar

Treat your rooks right

Without being a spectacular piece, the rook has its own hidden uniqueness. Handling it properly is very demanding, as **JUDIT POLGAR** shows.

Unlike its colleagues, the rook's mobility is not increased when it is centralized. On an empty board, the rook always has 14 squares at its disposal, regardless of whether it is placed in a corner or on a central square. This apparent 'indifference of placement' is relative, of course, since the chess board is usually crowded with pieces, but even so getting the best of the rook's activity remains a delicate matter.

The typical dilemma arises when there are three or more open or half-open files: which of them should we occupy with our rooks? The correct solution can usually be found by a very concrete approach and not just some general considerations. On my way to becoming a GM, I had such a game, one that I am still happy about.



Polgar-Lazic
Dortmund 1990
position after 21...♖d8

White needs to choose a way to defend the d5-pawn. Since the knight stands perfectly on the blocking e4-square, making the g7-bishop 'awfully bad', the solution looks simple: don't the rooks belong on c1 and d1? In principle this is true, but realizing this regrouping involves some subtleties.

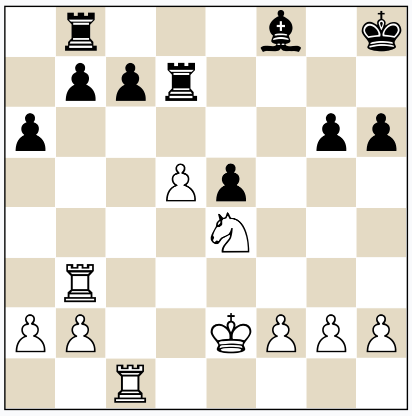
22.♖ad1!

After the natural 22.♖fd1 ♖ed7 the small trick I used in the game does not work: 23.♖dc1 ♖xd5 24.♖xc7? ♖d1+ and mates. The text threatens ♖d3, followed by ♖1d1 or ♖c1, consolidating White's domination.

22...♖ed7 23.♖c1! ♖f7 24.♖fd1

On the way to achieving my planned regrouping I lost a tempo, but in the meantime, Black has lost... two of them!

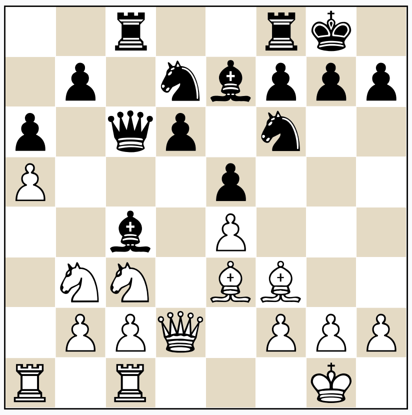
24...♖fd7 25.♔f1 ♔h8?! 26.♔e2 ♗f8 27.♖d3! h6?! 28.♖b3 ♖b8 Black avoids weakening the c6-square, hoping to prevent the activation of my second rook, but...



29.♖c6! A simple yet spectacular move, attacking g6 and a6 and forcing Black to irredeemably weaken his structure. I went on to win without any special problems.

Activating the rooks becomes even more complicated when there are no useful open files available. In this case, rook lifts to the third or fourth rank are thematic. As a kid I was impressed by Kasparov's repeated manoeuvre ♖a1-a3-g3 against Karpov's Zaitsev Ruy Lopez, but this is an established approach now.

Even before Kasparov's emergence as an elite player, Karpov himself was an expert in activating his rooks in non-conventional ways.



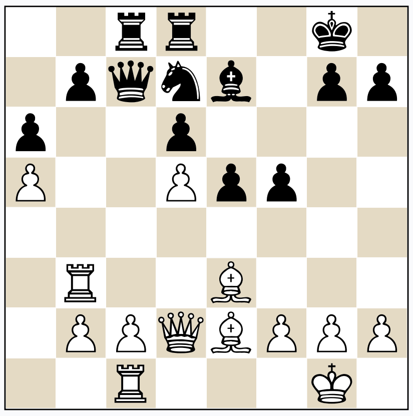
Karpov-Portisch
London 1982
position after 14...♗c4

15.♖a4 Quite typical for Karpov, who was a true artist in filling spaces cleared by his pawns with pieces.

In order to understand the necessity of the rook manoeuvre, it is useful to mention that 15.♘d5? is premature due to 15...♘xd5 16.exd5 ♕b5, followed by ...♗d8 and ...♘f6, leaving White over-extended.

15...♖fd8 Instead, 15...♗xb3?! 16.cxb3 would weaken Black's control of d5 and surrender the c4-square to White's rook and bishop: **16.♖b4 ♕c7 17.♘d5** and with his a5-pawn hanging, White has to finally use his bullet.

17...♘xd5 18.exd5 f5 19.♗e2 ♗xb3 20.♖xb3

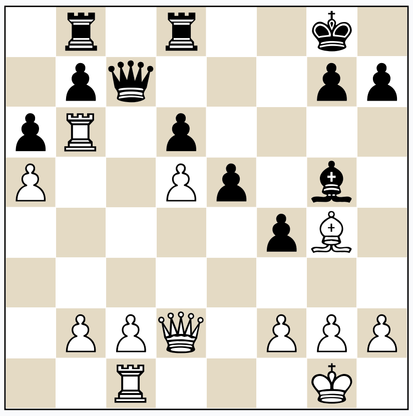


20...f4? A serious positional mistake, weakening the e4- and g4-squares, which will soon be occupied by Karpov's pieces. By forcing the exchange of the e3-bishop Portisch probably wanted to get some freedom for his queen, but the activation of White's reserve rook will soon shatter his illusions.

The natural 20...♘c5 would have been better, even if after 21.♖a3 the massive advance of the queenside pawns is quite annoying.

21.♗b6 ♘xb6 22.♖xb6 A glorious moment for this rook, which paralyses Black's queenside and sustains the pawn attack.

22...♗g5 23.♗g4 ♖b8



24.♖e1!

The second rook is getting ready to support the decisive attack.

24...♕c5?!

Clearly overlooking the next move and just wasting time.

The natural plan was to fight the intruding rook with ...♗g5-d8, but this was not easy to achieve in practice: 24...♖f8 25.♖e4 ♗d8 26.♖eb4 ♕e7 27.♖xa6.

25.♖e4!

Depriving the queen of the d4- and c4-squares.

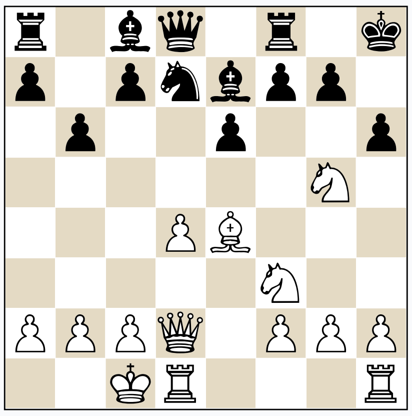
25...♖f8 26.b4 ♕c7 27.c4

> 'The rook is the only piece which can threaten the castled king without making a single move!'

With all his pieces perfectly placed, White's pawn attack is decisive.

27...♔h8 28.c5 dxc5 29.d6 ♕d8 30.bxc5 f3 31.♕d5 and White won.

Another interesting aspect is that the rook is the only piece which can threaten the castled king without making a single move! On its initial square, the rook only needs the opening of the h- (or a-) file to create decisive threats. The next example is not only my favourite experience with this theme but also one of my most memorable games ever!



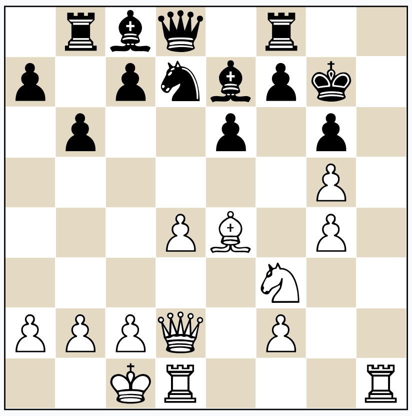
Polgar-Berkes
Budapest 2003
position after 13.♗e4

White has obvious kingside pressure and the a8-rook is hanging, but Black's position would be entirely viable after 13...♗xg5 14.♘xg5 ♖b8. My threats will take concrete shape only after Ferenc' over-optimistic piece-grabbing.

13...hxg5? Obviously relying on 14.♗xa8 g4, with a material advantage, since the knight cannot retreat due to the queen then trapping it with 15...♗g5. But I had seen a devilish idea...

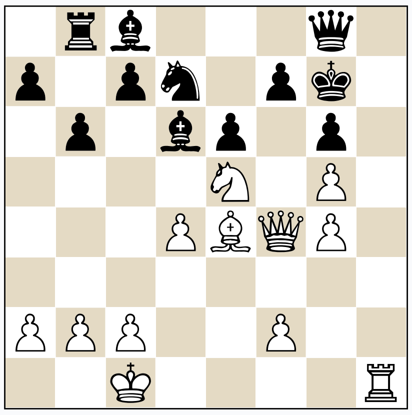
14.g4!! White blocks the g5-pawn in order to ensure the opening of the h-file with h2-h4.

14...♖b8 15.h4 g6 16.hxg5+ ♔g7



17.♕f4! White can afford attacking with 'quiet' moves only because of Black's incomplete development.

17...♗b7 Black was not ready to fight for the h-file: 17...♖h8 18.♖xh8 ♕xh8 19.♘e5! ♕g8 20.♖h1. Another apparently peaceful move. It may seem that Black will be able to neutralize the attack with 20...♗d6, but I had found a spectacular tactical resource:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

21.♖h7+!! ♔f8 22.♖h8!, and White will win the queen, since 22...♕xh8 23.♕xf7 is mate.

18.♖h7+! A thematic combination reminiscent of the old Dilaram Attack. No other piece could deliver such a shocking and effective blow from its initial square!

18...♔xh7 19.♕h2+ ♔g8 The bishop's lethal action is revealed after 19...♔g7 20.♕h6+ ♔g8 21.♗xg6!.

20.♖h1 ♗xg5+ 21.♘xg5 ♕xg5+

The equally desperate flight 21...♔g7 is met in neo-romantic fashion: 22.♘xe6+!! fxe6 23.♕h7+ ♔f6 24.g5+!! ♔xg5 25.♕h4 mate.

22.f4 ♕xf4+ What else?

23.♕xf4 ♗xe4 24.♕xe4 1-0.

For a detailed analysis of this game, please read my comments in *Judit Polgar teaches chess – A Game of Queens*. ■

Rock star Nakamura steals the show again

The 14th Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival ended with a couple of déjà vus. Hikaru Nakamura claimed first place for the third time to become the most successful contestant in the young history of the Festival. And **MAXIME VACHIER-LAGRAVE** lost another tiebreaker. But unlike in London, our reporter now at least finished in second place so that his satisfaction with his recent good form soon prevailed.

Moving quickly proved no problem for bullet expert Hikaru Nakamura in the Battle of the Sexes. This time the Men won 2-1.

This year marked my fifth visit to the Rock of Gibraltar after missing out on last year's event. Once again the organizers, led by Brian Callaghan and Stuart Conquest, had invited an impressive field, with former World Champion Vishy Anand as the top seed. Last year's winner Hikaru Nakamura was back to defend his title, while I had been invited so well in advance (I believe it was somewhere last March) that I had had time enough to first lose 50 rating points in the world rankings, then gain 60 back and arrive on the Rock hoping to keep my current form.

Along with me came a most impressive French delegation, with no fewer than three other players from the most recent national team, Etienne Bacrot, Laurent Fressinet and Romain Edouard, together with both our coaches, Sébastien Mazé and Fabien Libiszewski. In addition, we had Adrien Demuth and our friends from Martinique, who make the long trip every year. Obviously, France is not the only country repre-

SOPHIE TRIAY

sented in Gibraltar. Players come literally from all around the world, attracted by the generous £185,000 prize fund (including a £15,000 prize for the best woman, won by Anna Muzychuk) and the ever-growing number of side-events. This time, there was a Master Class by Vishy, and a new episode of the now well established Battle of the Sexes. After a fierce struggle, including a loss in Game 1 and great coaching by Captain Nigel Short, who replaced me with Laurent, Team Men prevailed in that one, 2-1! For those who like to sightsee there is, of course, the Rock and the wild monkeys that sometimes even make an appearance at the Caleta Hotel, where the tournament is being held. But most people will tell you that if there is one reason that they keep coming back year after year, it is mostly because of the extremely friendly atmosphere that reigns all over Gibraltar for the duration of the event.

As for the tournament itself, both Hikaru and I are pretty familiar with Opens, but the same cannot be said about Vishy, who was last seen in an Open in 1993, and that was the Biel Interzonal, part of the World Championship Cycle at the time. Needless to say, all eyes were on him to see how he would fare, especially against lesser rated players, since it's always a challenge to beat them on command. For Vishy things went awry right from the start, as he was held to a draw with white by Szidonia Vajda (2359) from Hungary. Possibly a bad opening choice, a solid game from his opponent and maybe a missed opportunity in a slightly better endgame; that's how these things happen. After a couple of wins and another draw he was paired as White with Adrien Demuth, a 24-year-old grandmaster from France.

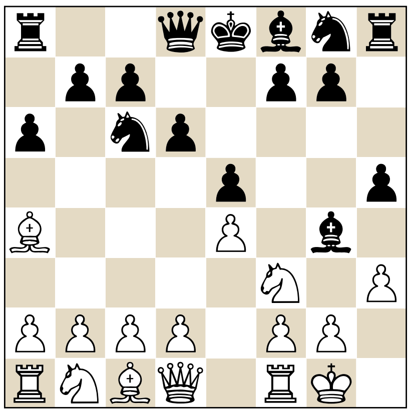
NOTES BY
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

RL 10.3 – C72
Vishy Anand
Adrien Demuth
Gibraltar 2016 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 d6
Adrien is normally fairly well-prepared, but obviously when you play Vishy, the requirement is upped by a few levels. Thus he decided to play a less theoretical line.
5.0-0 ♗g4 6.h3 h5

JOHN SAUNDERS

Really going for it! Young French GM Adrien Demuth fearlessly attacked Vishy Anand's king and was rewarded for his courage with a memorable victory.

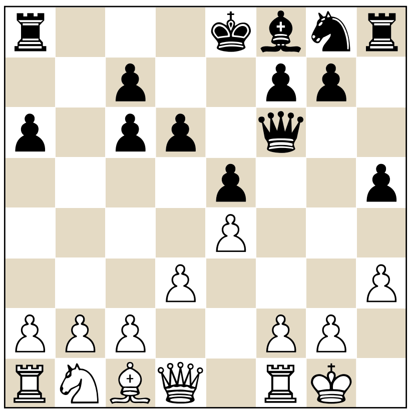


7.♗xc6+

After 7.d3 ♕f6! 8.hxg4?! hxg4 9.♗xc6+ bxc6 10.♘g5 ♕h6 11.f3 (11.f4 ♕h4 is very dangerous for White already) 11...♕h2+ 12.♔f2 ♗e7 Black's attack seems to compensate for the sacrificed material.

7.d4!? was my choice a few years ago and is probably the most challenging reply: 7...b5 8.♗b3 ♘xd4 9.hxg4 ♘xb3 (9...hxg4 10.♘g5 is good for White) 10.axb3 hxg4 11.♘g5 ♕d7!, and things are pretty unclear, as Black is generally following up with ...c6 and ...f6.

7...bxc6 8.d3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 ♕f6 10.♕d1



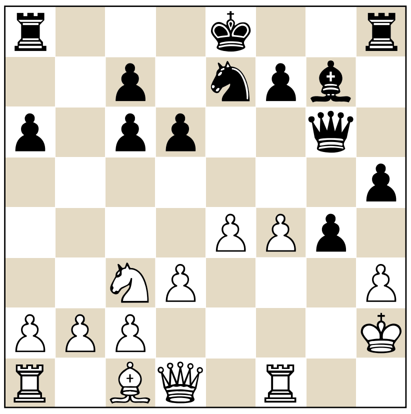
10...g5!

Really going for it! An interesting concept and I think a good choice against Vishy, who didn't expect to be asked such early questions against his king.

11.♘c3 ♘e7 12.g3

Playing for f4, but I am a bit sceptical of this idea, as it opens the long diagonal for the bishop.

12...♗g7 13.♔h2 ♕g6 14.f4 exf4 15.gxf4 g4



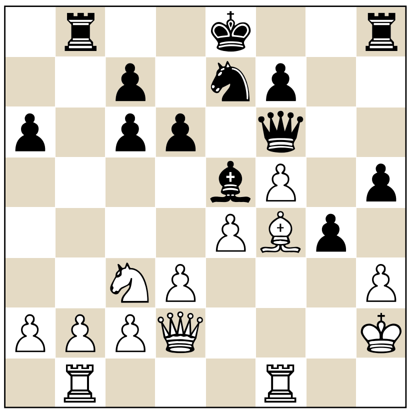
16.f5

16.d4 fails to 16...f5 17.e5 c5!, and White's centre collapses.

16...♗e5+ 17.♗f4 ♕f6

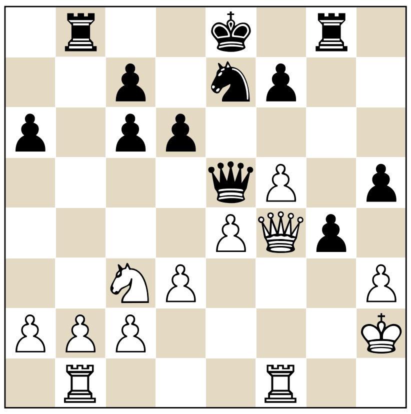
Black is definitely dominating on all sides thanks to his control of the long diagonal. He now needs to find a good way to get his ♘e7 into action!

18.♕d2 ♖b8 19.♖ab1



19...♖g8 Too hasty is 19...♖xb2?! 20.♖xb2 ♗xc3 21.e5! ♗xe5 22.♖b8+ ♔d7 23.♖xh8 ♕xh8, even though Black still should be alright there.

20.♗xe5 ♕xe5+ 21.♕f4



21...♕c5

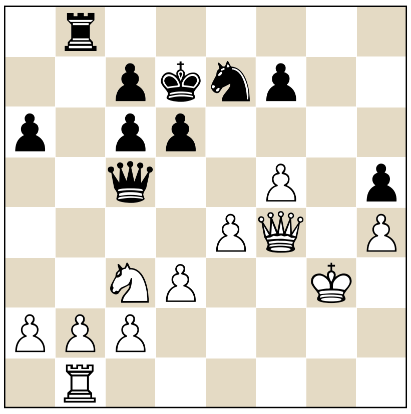
21...♕f6! was more to the point, as the queen is closer to the kingside and still a good ally on the queenside. Black's ...gxh3, opening the g-file, is the threat then, and 22.♖g1? ♘g6 spells trouble for White.

22.♖g1 ♔d7 23.h4 g3+!?

I like this move, because it opens lines on the king, but according to the engine, it was not yet necessary to resort to direct lines.

24.♖xg3 ♖xg3 25.♔xg3

25.♕xg3 ♖g8 26.♕f3 ♖g4 27.♔h3 boils down to the same.



25...♖g8+ 25...♖xb2? would be a beautiful draw after 26.♖xb2 ♕g1+ 27.♔h3 ♕h1+ 28.♔g3 ♕g1+ 29.♔f3 ♕f1+ 30.♔e3 ♕c1+, if not for 26.♘a4!.

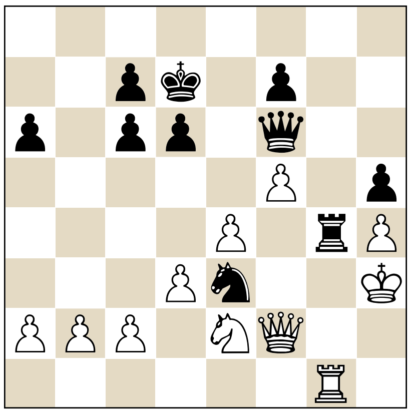
26.♔h3 26.♔f3 ♖g4 27.♕h2 d5 looks fairly dangerous as well. The king feels safer on h3.

26...♖g4 27.♕f3 ♕d4!?

27...♘g8 is also natural, deploying the knight, but Adrien executed the same idea in a different fashion.

28.♖f1 ♘d5! 29.♘e2 ♕f6 30.♕f2 ♘e3 The slight drawback of this approach is that now the knight is forced to wander a bit too far.

31.♖g1



31...♘xc2

Probably best was 31...c5!, but this is far too deep for anyone's taste: 32.b3 (32.c3? c4) 32...♖xg1 33.♘xg1 ♘g4 34.♕e2 ♕a1 35.♘f3 ♕xa2 36.♘h2 ♘xh2 37.♔xh2 ♕b1, and Black is in time with his counterplay.

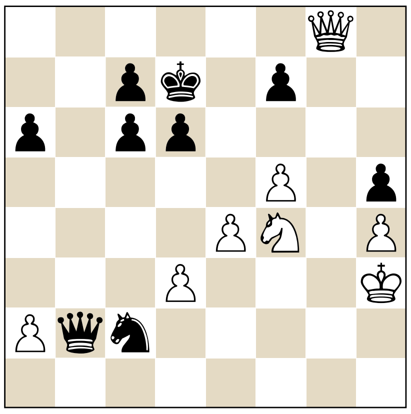
32.♘f4

Here 32.♖xg4! was very dangerous: 32...hxg4+ 33.♔xg4 ♕xb2 34.♘g3: the h-pawn runs quite fast and Black's pieces are a bit out of play: 34...c5 35.h5 ♕g7+ 36.♔h3 ♘d4 37.♕f4, and Black is in big trouble.

32...♖xg1 33.♕xg1 ♕xb2

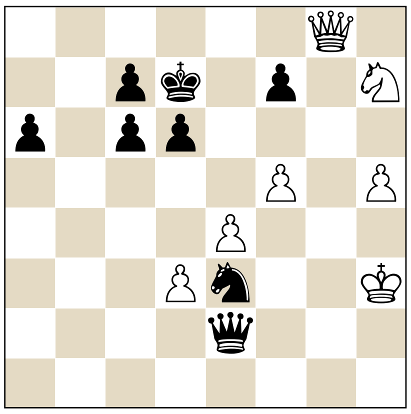
Both players were in serious time-trouble at this point, which is a bit unfortunate in such a double-edged position.

34.♕g8



34...♕xa2 Here 34...♕c1! would have forced a draw rightaway: 35.♘xh5 ♕f1+ 36.♔g4 ♕g2+ 37.♔f4 ♕d2+.

35.♘xh5 ♘e3 36.♘f6+ ♔e7 37.♘h7 ♔d7 38.h5 ♕e2

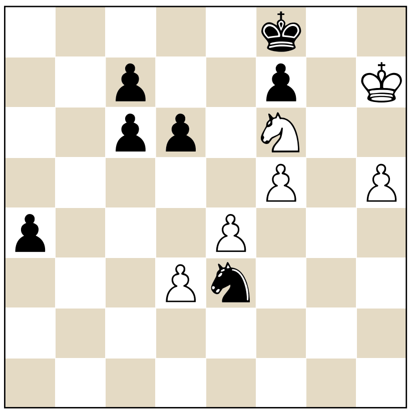


39.♔h4?? Right before the end of the time-trouble Vishy makes the wrong decision, and now Adrien wins the game with only forced moves.

White should have tried 39.♕xf7+ ♔c8 40.♕g8+ ♔b7 41.♘f6!, when the position is unbelievably complicated. Intuitively I would think Black's attack on the king should counterweigh White's scary passed pawn.

39...♕h2+ 40.♔g5 ♕g3+ 41.♔h6 ♕xg8 42.♘f6+ ♔e7 43.♘xg8+ ♔f8 44.♘f6 a5 After a series of absolutely only moves Adrien is completely winning with the a-pawn. An unfortunate set of circumstances for Vishy, as things suddenly went wrong in time-trouble. But at the same time Adrien played very enterprisingly from the beginning of the game, so in a sense he fully deserved his scalp!

45.♔h7 a4



And White resigned in view of 46.♘d7+ ♔e8 47.♘f6+ ♔e7 48.h6 a3 49.♔g8 a2 50.h7 a1♕ 51.h8♕ ♕xf6.

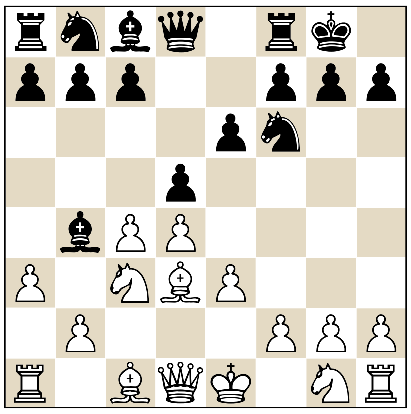
This loss was soon followed by another one against Benjamin Gledura, a 16-year-old promise from Hungary. Playing fast in a very drawish endgame, Anand made a careless move, after which things were extremely difficult and his position probably a technical loss. The last three games went much better, but I'm sure Vishy will want to forget this tournament as soon as possible. He'll have this opportunity soon in the Candidates' Tournament, where I think he'll definitely fare much better.

Adrien was not the only Frenchman who left Gibraltar with a few games to remember, the French squad generally performed very strongly. The secret of our successes may have resided in our custom-made schedule throughout the event: Australian Open in the morning (with some eccentrics waking up at 5 a.m. to cheer for Roger), one or more decks of cards available at all times before and after the games, regular visits to the fitness room and occasional visits to the casino. But more certainly, the fact that we were all motivating each other and rooting for each other at all times was a decisive factor. I have to say some special words of praise for Sébastien Mazé, who had an amazing tournament and produced the following game against Dmitry Jakovenko.

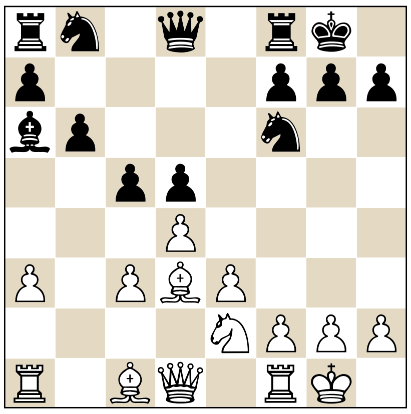
NOTES BY
Sébastien Mazé

NI 8.1 – E49
Dmitry Jakovenko
Sébastien Mazé
Gibraltar 2016 (7)

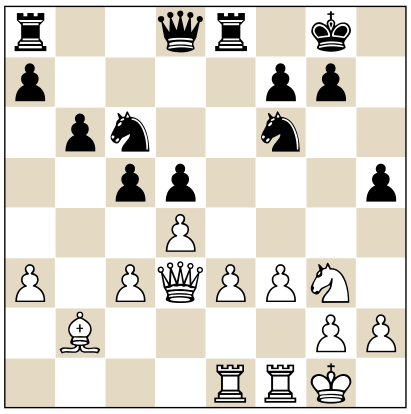
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4
I recently changed my openings with black. It was a risky choice to play my first Nimzo-Indian against a top player!
4.e3 0-0 5.♗d3 d5 6.a3



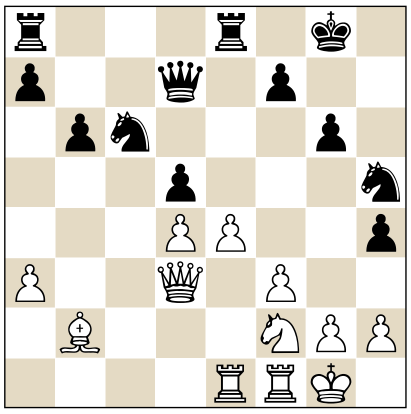
A first surprise; my opponent is going for this tricky line with f3. Normally it is a bit dubious, but Black needs to play accurately.
6...♗xc3+ 7.bxc3 c5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘e2 b6 10.0-0 ♗a6
This plan is important. Black will exchange his bad bishop and defuse White's attack a bit, as it would be more powerful with his light-squared bishop still in play.



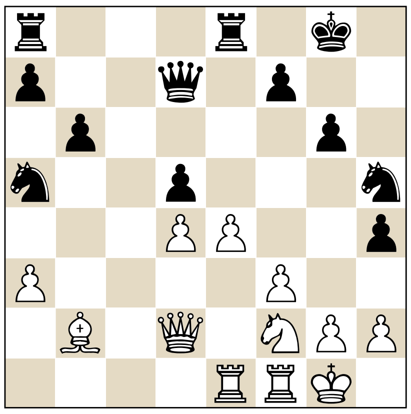
11.f3
After 11.♗xa6 ♘xa6 the knight will return to the e6-square: 12.f3 ♘c7 13.♘g3 ♖e8 14.♖a2 ♖c8 15.a4 ♘e6 16.♗b2 cxd4 17.cxd4 h5, with a pleasant position for Black (0-1, 52) in Paravyan-Saric, Yerevan 2014.
11...♖e8 12.♘g3 ♗xd3 13.♕xd3 ♘c6 14.♗b2 h5
A typical move in this line to gain space on the kingside.
15.♖ae1



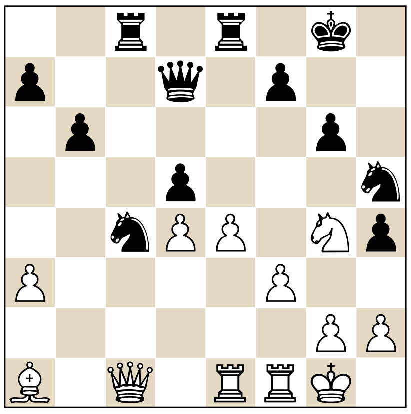
15...cxd4? A big strategical mistake! My lack of experience is showing. White's dark-squared bishop now has good prospects.
The logical move was to close the position with 15...c4, and now, after 16.♕d2 g6, Black's position is safe, as White is not in time to play e4, as after 17.e4 h4 18.♘f5 gxf5 19.♕g5+ ♔h8 20.♕h6+ ♔g8 21.e5 ♖e6 22.exf6 ♕xf6 23.♖xe6 ♕xe6 Black is fine.
16.cxd4 g6 17.♘h1
A strong move by Jakovenko, just like Nimzowitsch! The knight is recycling to a good square on f2.
17...♕d7 18.e4 h4 19.♘f2 ♘h5



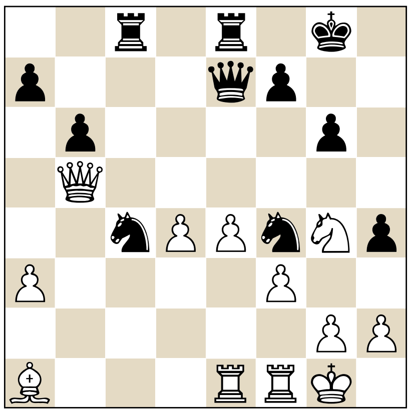
20.♕d2?
A strange move by the Russian player, allowing me to play ...♘a5.
The simple 20.♗c3 would have given White a pleasant edge. The manoeuvre ♕d2-h6 is now very strong!: 20...♖ac8 21.♕d2 ♕d6 22.♘g4, and White's attack looks very promising.
20...♘a5



21.♘g4
Sacrificing a piece with 21.♕h6? leads nowhere: 21...♘c4 22.♘h3 ♘xb2 23.♘g5 f6 24.♕xg6+ ♕g7 25.♕xh5 ♕xg5, and Black wins.
21...♘c4 22.♕c1
After 22.♕h6 ♘xb2 23.♕xh5 gxh5 24.♘f6+ ♔g7 25.♘xd7 ♖ed8 26.♘e5 ♖ac8 Black has nothing to fear, as he controls the c-file.
22...♖ac8 23.♗a1

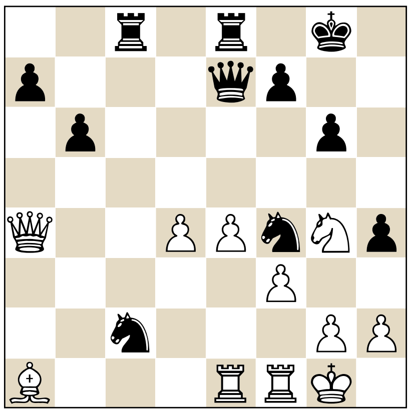


23...♕d6! After a long think I played this move with the idea of activating my knights.
Bad was 23...dxe4?? 24.♕h6 ♕d5 25.fxe4 ♖xe4 26.♖xe4 ♕xe4 27.d5, and the bishop is suddenly a monster! Game over!
And 23...f5 24.exf5 ♘e3 25.♗c3 ♘xf5 26.♕d2 ♖xe1 27.♖xe1 ♕c7 scared me a bit... My knights are strong assets, but my king is a bit of a concern.
24.♕g5 ♕e7 25.♕xd5
After 25.♕xe7 ♖xe7 26.exd5 ♖d7 27.♖c1 b5 the position is equal.
25...♘f4 26.♕b5



26...♘xa3 Here I missed the accurate 26...f5!, which gives Black a great position: 27.♘h6+ (White is mated after 27.exf5? ♕xe1 28.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 29.♔f2 ♘d3 mate) 27...♔g7 28.♘xf5+ gxf5 29.♕xf5 ♖f8 .

27.♕a4 ♘c2



28.♖d1

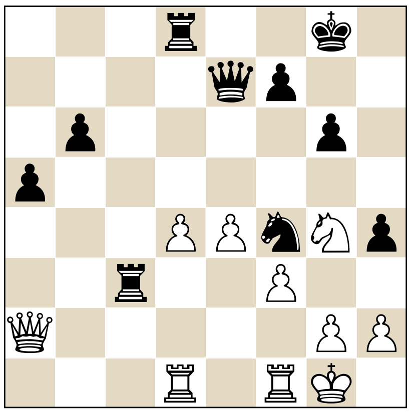
28.d5 ♘xe1 leads to a lovely perpetual check: 29.♘f6+ ♔f8 30.♘h7+ ♔g8 31.♘f6+ ♔f8.

28...♘xa1 29.♖xa1 a5

At this point, I didn't know who was better. I think it's a dynamically balanced position. Both players have their trumps and chances.

30.♕a2 ♖ed8 31.♖ad1 ♖c3

A key move, activating my rook.



32.g3

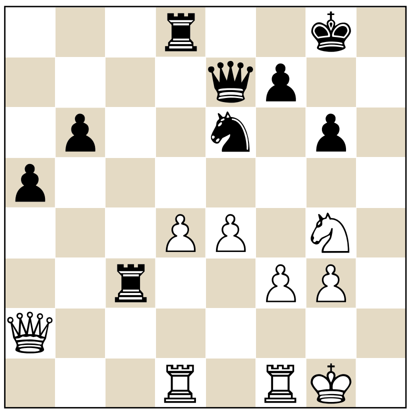
JOHN SAUNDERS

Sébastien Mazé had an amazing tournament, including a fine win against Dmitry Jakovenko, his first 2700+ scalp.

A committal move, but otherwise my knight is too strong.

32.♕d2 is met by 32...♕c7!, and White can't fight for the c-file yet.

32...hxg3 33.hxg3 ♘e6



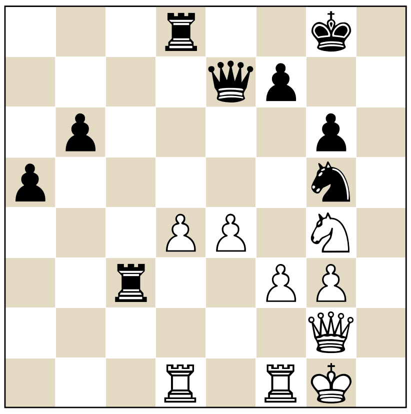
34.♕f2? A terrible mistake by Jakovenko. The queen is going to the worst possible square.

The critical move was 34.d5!, when 34...♘g5 35.♔g2 ♕c5 36.♕a1 gives White a slight edge because now Black's king is in trouble.

34...♘g5

At this point, I felt the game was going in the right direction for me. But the win was not in sight quite yet, as I was running out of time.

35.♕g2 As 35.♕e2 runs into 35...f5!.



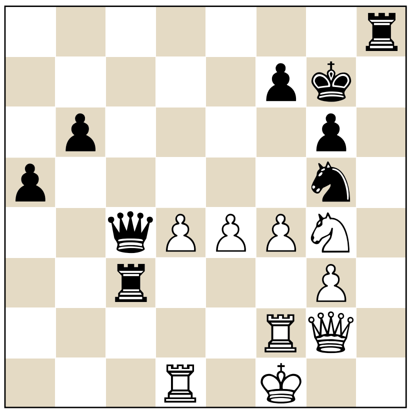
35...♔g7!

A good manoeuvre. I will improve the position of my rook via the h-file.

36.♖f2 ♖h8 37.♔f1 ♕c7

All Black's pieces are now in the arena, White's position is hopeless.

38.f4 ♕c4+



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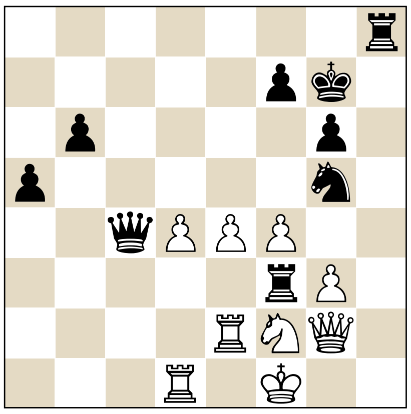
39.♖e2 Here 39.♔e1 ♖xg3 40.♕xg3 ♖h1+ 41.♔d2 ♘xe4+ would have been a nice finish.

39...♖f3+ 40.♘f2



40...♕b3 The final touch, attacking both the rook on d1 and the pawn on g3... White resigned. Both an important victory for the tournament standings and a great feeling for me, as it was my first win against a player over 2700, and in a good fashion!

■ ■ ■

Meanwhile, Hikaru and I were having rather similar tournaments, grabbing wins whenever we had the opportunity and making draws otherwise. Our paths wouldn't cross during the tournament, but before the last round we were in shared lead with six other players: David Anton, who was having an excellent tournament, Li Chao, Pentala Harikrishna, S.P Sethuraman, and two French guys: Etienne Bacrot, who had been playing very solidly so far, and, as you might have understood by now, Sébastien Mazé. All with 7 points out of 9. Fate had it that I was to play Sébastien with black. Both of us being in a must-win situation was a big change, since we both had a 30-game unbeaten run! In the other key games, Etienne was set to play Sethuraman with white and was hoping to put some pressure, while Hari was playing Li Chao in a heavyweight duel, and Hikaru was playing David with White.

Etienne did not get much as White and quickly had to settle for a draw, while Hikaru was having a big fight with David.

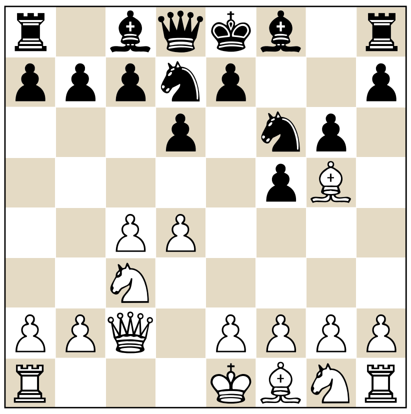
NOTES BY
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

HD 5.2 – A85
Hikaru Nakamura
David Anton
Gibraltar 2016 (10)

1.d4 f5
The Dutch Defence is a favourite of David Anton's.

2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗g5
Hikaru comes up with a little subline with an idea that has been played before by Mamedyarov, against Hikaru!

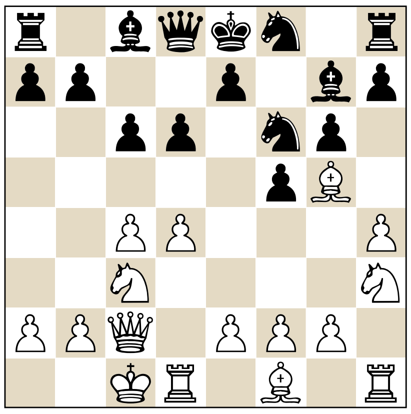
4...♘bd7 5.♕c2 g6



6.h4!?
6.e4 fxe4 7.♘xe4 ♗g7 is awkward for White, as despite him managing to play e4, his pieces are not well coordinated and his d4-pawn is weak: 8.♘f3 ♘xe4 9.♕xe4 c5!, and Black has a great position.

6...♗g7
6...h6 7.♗d2!? might have been his new idea, when after 7...e5 8.e3 the ♘d7 is in an awkward spot, as 8...♗g7 will run into 9.h5! ♘xh5 10.g4.

7.0-0-0 c6 8.♘h3 ♘f8!



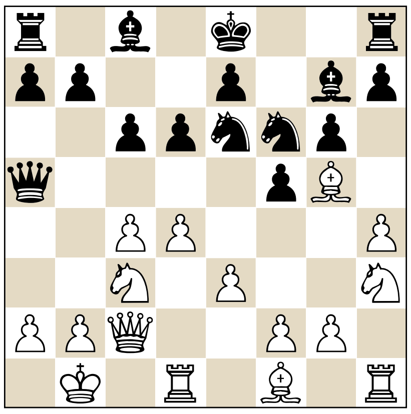
A great reaction from David, as he might get the bishop pair quite soon and White has no good way to open the centre and punish him for losing a few tempi in the process.

9.e3

Here 9.♘f4 ♘g4! 10.e4 h6 doesn't work for White at all.

9.e4 is double-edged, but ultimately Black will take firm control of the centre: 9...♘xe4 (9...fxe4 10.♗xf6 ♗xf6 11.♘xe4 ♗g7 would give White this extra option and extra tempi) 10.♘xe4 fxe4 11.♕xe4 ♘e6! 12.♗e2 d5! 13.cxd5 ♘xg5 14.♘xg5 ♕xd5, with a great position for Black.

9...♕a5 10.♔b1 ♘e6



A very simple but effective method. Hikaru is now struggling to find a good plan.

11.♗e2

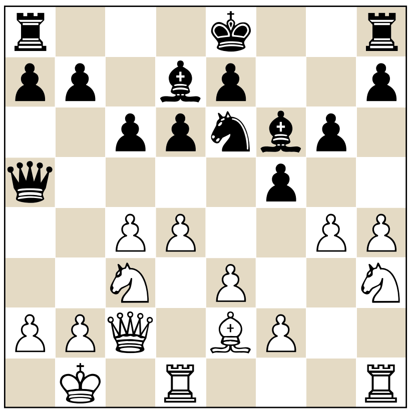
11.♘f4 ♘xf4 12.♗xf4 ♗e6 didn't appeal to Hikaru, as the frightening ...b5 could now be on the table.

11...♗d7 12.♗xf6

12.♘f4 ♘xf4 13.♗xf4 b5 also looks good for Black.

12...♗xf6 13.g4

At least finding a way to safely develop an initiative on the kingside, even at the cost of the bishop pair.



SOPHIE TRIAY

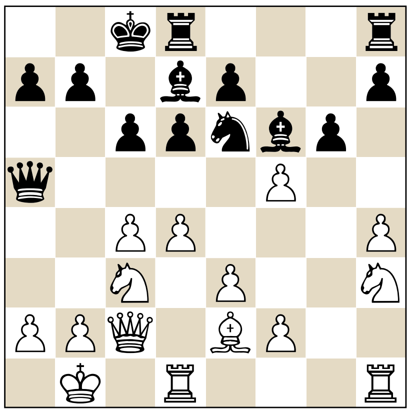
David Anton shares his thoughts with tournament director Stuart Conquest. The 20-year-old Spanish GM saw his hopes to win Gibraltar dashed by a last-round loss to Nakamura.

13...0-0-0

13...♗xh4 14.c5! looks dangerous for Black after 14...0-0-0 15.gxf5 gxf5 16.cxd6 exd6 17.♘b5! ♗e7 18.d5 ♘c7 19.dxc6 ♗xc6 20.♘xc7 ♕xc7 21.♗f3!, and White will come out ahead.

14.gxf5

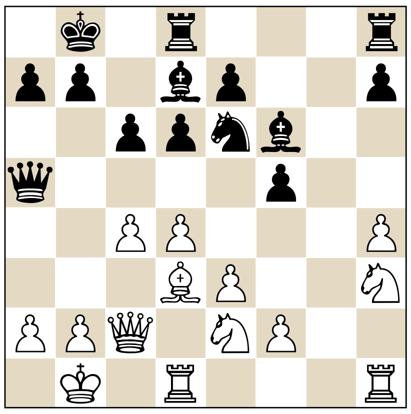
Another way to create an initiative on the kingside was 14.g5!? ♗g7 15.h5, but 15...h6! may work quite well after 16.gxh6 ♖xh6 17.♖hg1 ♗e8! (17...gxh5? 18.d5) 18.♖g3 ♗f6 19.hxg6 ♖xg6 20.♖f3 ♘g7, when Black's position is still very sound, and his bishop pair may become of interest a few moves later.



14...gxf5

There was nothing wrong with 14...♕xf5!? 15.♗d3 (15.h5 ♕xc2+ 16.♔xc2 ♘g7, and Black is at least equal) 15...♕a5 16.♘g5 ♘xg5 17.hxg5 ♗xg5 18.♖h2 ♗f6 19.♖dh1, and White gets back his pawn, but definitely has no advantage whatsoever.

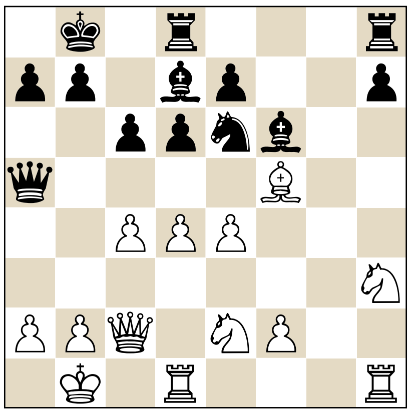
15.♗d3 ♔b8 16.♘e2



16...♗xh4?!

A strange decision. Things start going astray for Black from this point on, as Hikaru can roll out his centre. Maybe 16...♘g7! looked a bit passive to David, but ...e5 might be next and Black could look a lot more threatening after a couple of more moves.

17.♗xf5 ♗f6 18.e4

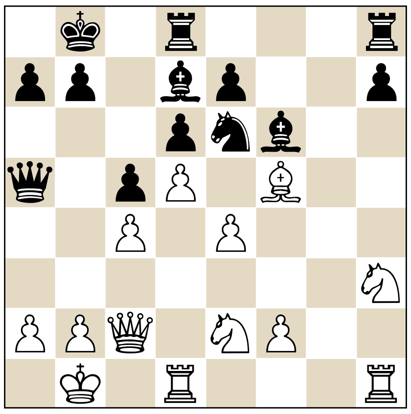


18...c5?

Giving up his main trump in the position without a fight. I understand that David might have been thinking of creating an attack on the queenside with the help of the open long diagonal, but he is definitely too late.

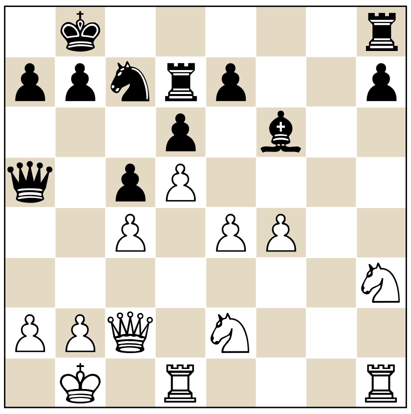
Instead, 18...h5! 19.f4 ♖hg8 20.e5 ♗h8 looks very strange, but White has no obvious way to exploit Black's piece placement: 21.♖dg1?! ♖gf8, and now it's White's pieces, and especially his bishop, that are looking strange.

19.d5



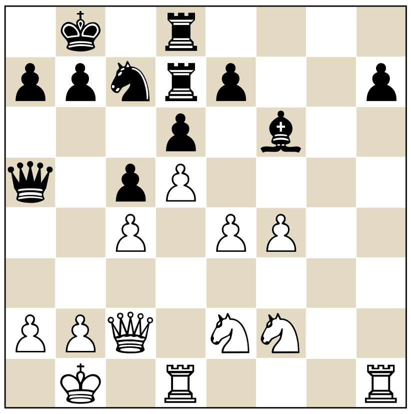
19...♘c7 After 19...♘d4 20.♘xd4 ♗xd4 21.♗xd7 ♖xd7 22.♘g5 b5 23.♘e6 ♗f6 24.f4 bxc4 25.♕xc4 ♖b7 (25...♖c8 26.♖h5! ♖b7 27.e5) 26.e5 dxe5 27.♘xc5 White's attack comes first.

20.♗xd7 ♖xd7 21.f4



21...♖hd8 After 21...b5 22.e5 dxe5 23.fxe5 ♗xe5 24.♕f5 spoils all the fun, but now Black has to lose valuable tempi for his attack.

22.♘f2



A very simple regrouping that puts Black in a lot of trouble.

22...b5

Or 22...e6 23.♖h6! ♗g7 24.dxe6 ♗xh6 25.exd7 ♖xd7 26.e5, and White breaks through.

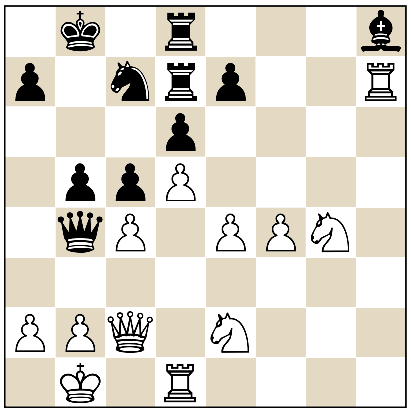
23.♘g4 ♗h8

After 23...bxc4 24.♕xc4 ♘b5 White has 25.a4!.

24.♖xh7

A fascinating struggle to win the fight for the centre has fizzled out in a few moves.

24...♕b4



25.♘e3

25.♖dh1 would have been more direct, but Hikaru's move is not leaving Black a straw to cling to.

25...a6 26.a3 ♕a5 27.♘f5

The rest is easy.

27...♖e8 28.e5 bxc4 29.♖dh1 ♘b5 30.a4 Black resigned.

Very similarly, I had a very complicated struggle with Sébastien.

NOTES BY

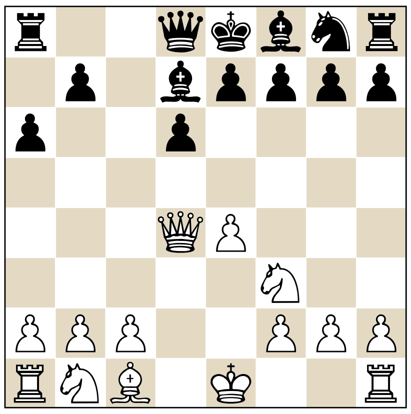
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

SI 1.4 – B51
Sébastien Mazé
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Gibraltar 2016 (10)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♘d7 4.d4

Sébastien and I had a tremendous debate about the line 4.c3 ♘gf6 5.♕e2 before the World Blitz Championship in Berlin, but now he decided to deviate early on.

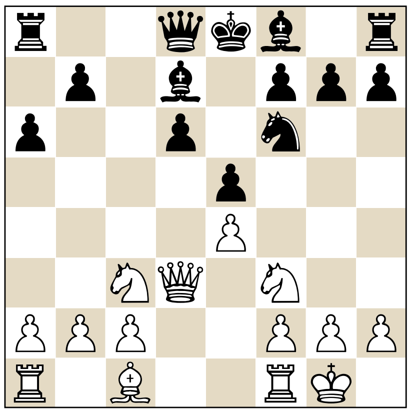
4...cxd4 5.♕xd4 a6 6.♗xd7+ ♗xd7



7.0-0

The line 7.c4 ♘f6 8.♗g5 e6 9.♘c3 ♗c6 10.0-0 ♗e7 also gives Black a reasonable position, but it is less suitable for a must-win situation.

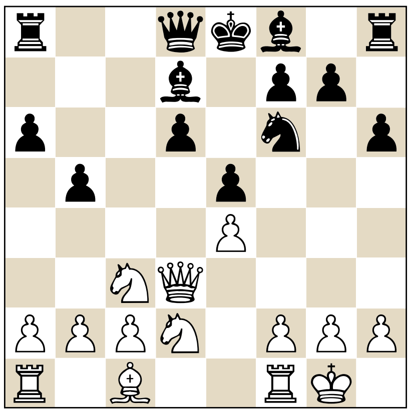
7...♘f6 8.♘c3 e5 9.♕d3



9...h6

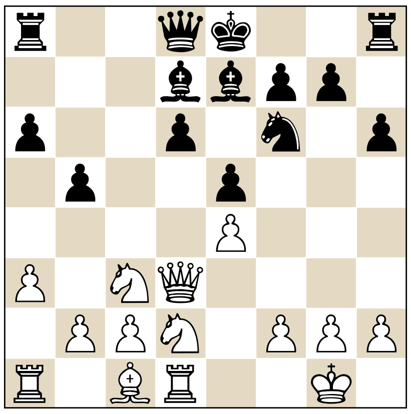
Typically needed to prevent ♗g5 and keep good control of the d5-square. Now White's mission would be to transfer his knight from f3 to e3.

10.♘d2 b5



11.a3 The main move is 11.a4. Black can calmly reply 11...♖b8 12.axb5 axb5 13.♖d1 ♗e7 14.b4 0-0 15.♘f1 ♗e6 16.♘e3 ♕d7, when White has a good grip on the d5-square, but has made a lot of concessions in the process, making the position very balanced.

11...♗e7 12.♖d1

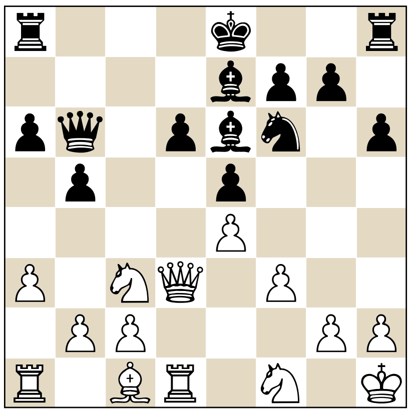


12...♗g4!?

This move seemed very natural in the heat of the action. In hindsight, I don't think forcing f3 is such a good idea.

Simplest was 12...♗e6 13.♘f1 0-0 14.♘e3 ♕c7 15.♗d2 ♖fc8, with a very nice position, as White doesn't have a convincing way to shuffle his pieces in the right way.

13.f3 ♕b6+ 14.♔h1 ♗e6 15.♘f1



SOPHIE TRIAY

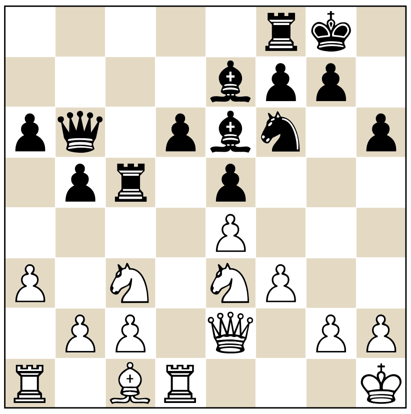
Australian Open in the morning, one or more decks of cards available at all times, and good strong chess. How could Maxime Vachier-Lagrave not have a good time in Gibraltar?

15...0-0 Here 15...♗c4 16.♕d2 d5? is a trick that doesn't work at all: 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.exd5 ♗xd5? 19.♕xd5 ♖d8 20.♗e3, and White wins.

16.♘e3 ♖ac8!?

After 16...♖fc8 17.♘cd5 ♗xd5 18.♘xd5 ♘xd5 White gets the extra possibility of 19.♕xd5 thanks to the attack on the ♖a8, which allows him to consolidate his grip on the d5-square.

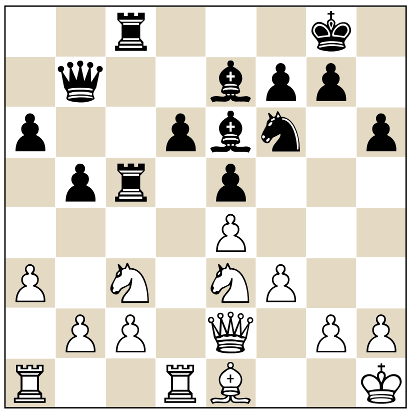
17.♕e2 ♖c5



18.♗d2

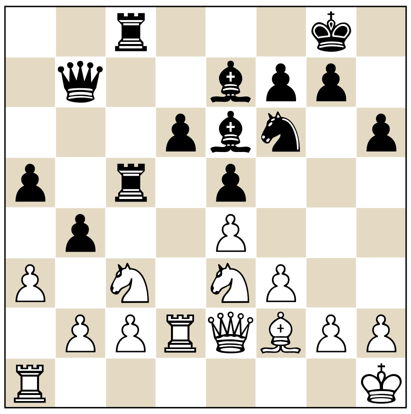
In case of 18.♘f5!? ♗xf5 19.♗e3 ♗e6 20.b4 ♕c6 21.bxc5 dxc5 Black has a very compact position and decent compensation for the exchange he has invested.

18...♖fc8 19.♗e1 ♕b7



20.♖d2 After 20.♗h4 ♖xc3 21.bxc3 ♘xe4! 22.fxe4 ♗xh4 White's shattered pawn structure grants Black a very pleasant position.

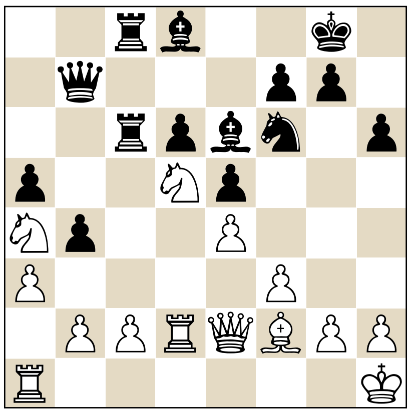
20...a5 21.♗f2 b4



22.♘a4 The most natural and probably the best was 22.axb4 axb4

23.♘cd5, but this was a difficult decision to make: 23...♗xd5 24.exd5! (24.♘xd5 simplifies the position considerably, but there is a big issue at the end of the day!: 24...♘xd5 25.♗xc5 ♘f4 26.♖a7 ♕xa7 27.♗xa7 ♘xe2 28.♖xe2 b3! – White was just a tempo short from consolidating... – 29.c3 – or 29.cxb3 ♖c1+ 30.♗g1 d5, and winning – 29...♖a8 30.♗f2 ♖a2, and White is in trouble) 24...♖a8 25.♖xa8+ ♕xa8 26.♘f5 ♖c7, with a complicated position that was still to my taste.

22...♖5c6 23.♘d5 ♗d8!

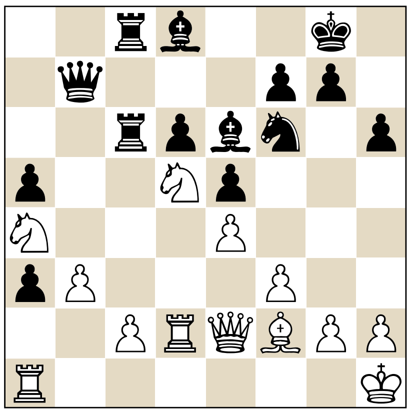


24.b3?

White's position is uncomfortable already, and this move doesn't help.

24...bxa3?

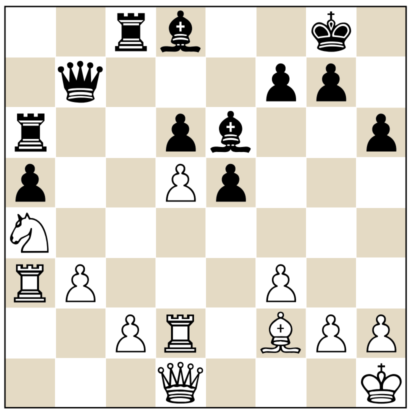
I was not entirely convinced that 24...♗xd5! would work right away, so I went for an option I thought was more convincing. If I had seen White's reply, I would probably have spent more time calculating all my options. After 24...♗xd5 I calculated 25.exd5 ♘xd5 26.♖xd5 ♖xc2 27.♖d2 ♖c1+ 28.♖xc1 (28.♖d1 ♖8c2! and wins) 28...♖xc1+ 29.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 30.♕xd1 bxa3 and stopped here. In fact, the passed pawn will cause White a lot of trouble after 31.♕xd6 ♗e7 32.♕d1 ♕c6.



25.♕d1! A cold shower, as all my planned tactics fall through, and my a-pawn is dead meat.

White rightly avoids 25.♖xa3? ♘xd5 26.exd5 ♗xd5 27.♖xd5 ♖xc2 28.♖d2 ♖xd2 29.♕xd2, when 29...♗g5 wins material: 30.♗e3 (or 30.♕xd6 ♖c1+ 31.♗g1 ♗e7) 30...♕b4! 31.♗xg5 (31.♖a2 ♗xe3 32.♕xe3 ♕xb3!) 31...hxg5!, and the double attack combined with the back-rank mate is lethal.

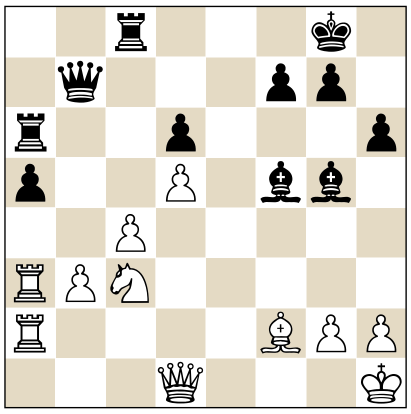
25...♖a6!? 26.♖xa3 ♘xd5 27.exd5



27...♗f5?!

27...♗d7! was a decision for wise men, keeping the upper hand. But the heat of the action got the better of me and I decided to open the centre at all cost, notwithstanding the ugly placement of my ♕b7 and ♖a6, which were too far from the place to which I was transferring the action.

28.c4 ♗g5 29.♖da2 e4 30.fxe4 ♗xe4 31.♘c3 ♗f5



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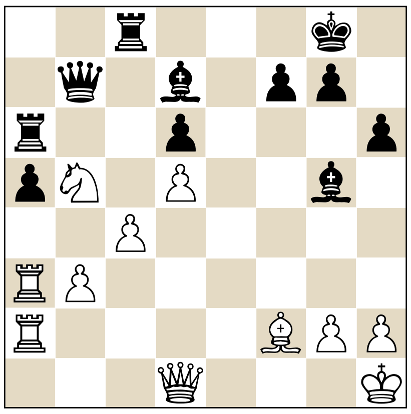
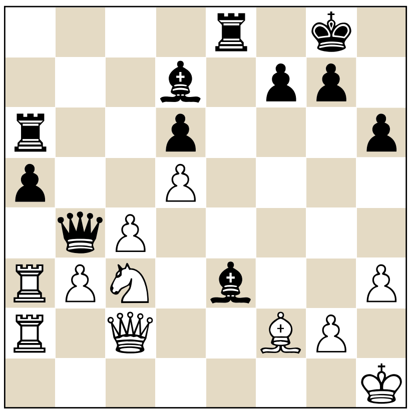
SOPHIE TRAY

In the all-decisive game MVL had Hikaru Nakamura on the ropes, but in the end the Armageddon specialist prevailed once again.

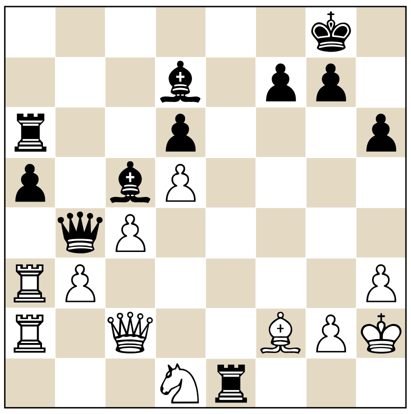
32.♘b5?
A bad miscalculation, as this move was absolutely unneeded.
32.♗d4! was far more annoying. White keeps control of the queenside and the centre, as the a5-pawn is on the verge of falling and I have no entry point on the e-file.
32...♗d7



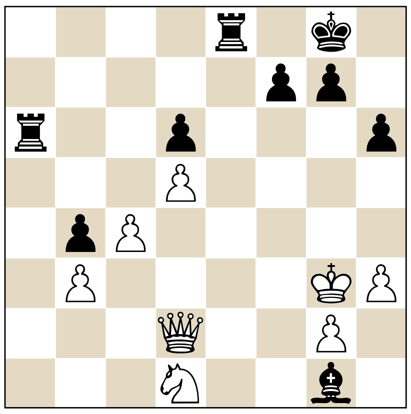
33.♘c3 Bad was 33.♖xa5? ♗xb5 34.h4 (the only move, as 34.♖xb5 loses to 34...♕xb5 35.cxb5 ♖xa2) 34...♖xa5 35.♖xa5 ♗xc4 36.bxc4 ♗f6.
And 33.♘d4?! wouldn't be the ideal square for the knight, while Black also has the concrete option of 33...a4.
33...♖e8 34.h3 ♕b4 35.♕c2
35.♗d4 ♗e3 36.♖a1 would be holding by a thread, but apparently White is still fine.
35...♗e3 Playing on Sébastien's time-trouble, I decided to bring some more action to the board. Nonetheless, it would have been more precise to bring more pieces to the action first. In that respect, 35...♖aa8! was the better move.



36.♘d1! ♗c5!
After 36...♗xf2 37.♘xf2 ♕e1+ 38.♔h2 ♕e5+ 39.g3 ♗f5 40.♕d2 White's position is still surprisingly solid.
37.♔h2!
Not falling into the trap! 37.♗xc5? dxc5! would clinch me both the 6th rank for the ♖a6 and the b8-h2 diagonal for the queen, putting White's king in immediate and lethal danger.
37...♖e1!? Unfortunately, 37...♕b6 doesn't force ♗xc5 at all, as White can just wait with 38.♕c3.



38.♖a4? Collapsing under pressure. Black would have retained a slight advantage after 38.♗xe1 ♕xe1 39.♘f2 ♗xa3 40.♖xa3 ♖a8.
But White's best defence was 38.♘b2!, a difficult move to make considering how much White's pieces look out of play on the queenside. But he needs only one more move, ♘d3, after which the tables will be drastically turned: 38...♗xf2 39.♕xf2 ♕c3 40.♘d3 ♖e4, and although I'm still pressing hard, White has good chances to defend.
38...♗xa4 39.♖xa4 ♗xf2 40.♖xb4
After 40.♕xf2 ♕xb3 41.♕xe1 ♕xa4 it is important that the e8-square is under firm control.
40...♗g1+ 41.♔g3 axb4 42.♕d2 ♖e8

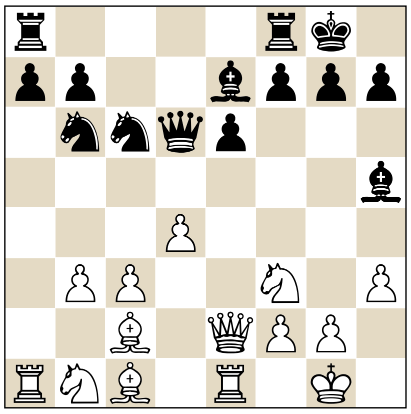


If not for the knight being out of play, White would keep some hope of survival, but he has no way to bring it back, so Sébastien resigned after **43.♕xb4 ♖b6** without waiting for ...♖eb8 and ...♖xb3+.

Gibraltar 2016

					TPR
1	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2785	8	2838
2	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2787	8	2811
3	Etienne Bacrot	FRA	2697	7½	2786
4	S.P. Sethuraman	IND	2639	7½	2781
5	Pentala Harikrishna	IND	2755	7½	2773
6	Gawain Jones	ENG	2625	7½	2730
7	Li Chao	CHN	2751	7½	2721
8	Emil Sutovsky	ISR	2647	7½	2628
9	Markus Ragger	AUT	2689	7	2737
10	Abhijeet Gupta	IND	2613	7	2716
	Sébastien Mazé	FRA	2591	7	2716
12	Dmitry Jakovenko	RUS	2732	7	2711
13	David Anton Guijarro	ESP	2639	7	2706
14	Lazaro Bruzon	CUB	2666	7	2703
15	Nils Grandelius	SWE	2635	7	2692
16	Richard Rapport	HUN	2721	7	2682
17	Anna Muzychuk	UKR	2537	7	2677
18	Santosh Gujrathi Vidit	IND	2642	7	2675
19	Zoltan Almasi	HUN	2684	7	2662
20	Romain Edouard	FRA	2617	7	2650
21	Federico Perez Ponsa	ARG	2577	7	2628
22	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2700	7	2624
23	Gata Kamsky	USA	2665	7	2612
24	Luka Lenic	SLO	2611	6½	2693
25	Benjamin Gledura	HUN	2515	6½	2691
26	Aryan Tari	NOR	2556	6½	2676
27	Radoslaw Wojtaszek	POL	2727	6½	2670
28	Yu Yangyi	CHN	2747	6½	2657
29	Ni Hua	CHN	2697	6½	2643
30	Lalith Babu M R	IND	2553	6½	2641
31	Antoaneta Stefanova	BUL	2515	6½	2637
32	Sergey Grigoriants	RUS	2580	6½	2629
33	Grigoriy Oparin	RUS	2565	6½	2608
34	Tan Zhongyi	CHN	2504	6½	2600
35	Axel Bachmann	PAR	2610	6½	2592
36	Jan-Krzysztof Duda	POL	2660	6½	2590
	Bai Jinshi	CHN	2507	6½	2590
38	Andreas Kelires	CYP	2444	6½	2579
39	Chanda Sandipan	IND	2583	6½	2577
40	Fabien Libiszewski	FRA	2515	6½	2575
41	Vishy Anand	IND	2784	6½	2568
42	Nigel Short	ENG	2684	6½	2565
43	Xander Wemmers	NED	2352	6½	2547
44	Luca Shytaj	ITA	2443	6½	2543
45	Surya Shekhar Ganguly	IND	2660	6½	2532
46	Sarasadat Khademalsharieh	IRI	2392	6½	2528
47	Vishnu Prasanna	IND	2518	6½	2517
48	Matthew Herman	USA	2370	6½	2454
49	Renier Vazquez Igarza	ESP	2572	6	2640
50	Dronavalli Harika	IND	2511	6	2617
	257 players, 10 rounds				

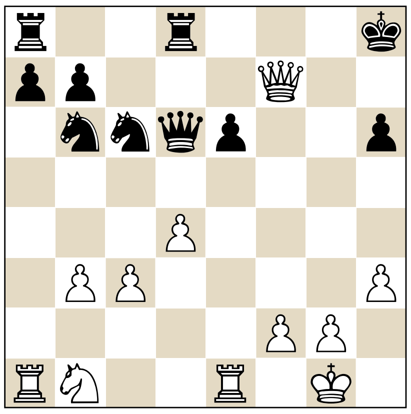
Fighting very hard to join Hikaru and me in a tiebreak was Hari, but he let his chance slip and after a tenacious defence by Li Chao he had to resign himself to a draw after six hours of play. And so the tiebreak was only between Hikaru and myself. This final climax was a tough struggle. Perhaps Hikaru missed the best chance to open the score in Game 1.



Nakamura-Vachier-Lagrave
Gibraltar 2016 (tiebreak-1)
position after 15.d4

15...♖fd8 I had simply forgotten that my f7-pawn was undefended now, allowing the typical shot:

16.♗xh7+! ♔xh7 17.♘g5+ ♗xg5 18.♕xh5+ ♗h6 19.♗xh6 gxh6 20.♕xf7+ ♔h8 21.♕f6+ ♔h7 22.♕f7+ ♔h8



23.♖xe6?

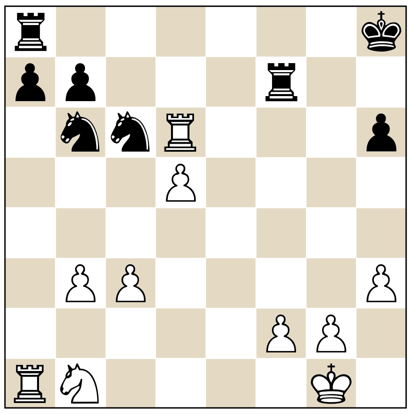
23.♕f6+ ♔h7 24.♖xe6! was worrying me far more, but the follow-up was admittedly not obvious and I was not certain my position was that bad: 24...♕f8 25.♕g6+ ♔h8 26.♘d2! ♘d5 27.♖ae1! ♕g7 28.♕h5! ♘f6 29.♕h4, and White has a lasting attack, is equal on material and has more active pieces, all of which would have made my defence extremely problematic.

23...♖f8! 23...♕f8 24.♕xb7 would have been good for White.

24.♖xd6

After 24.♕g6 Black has 24...♕f4.

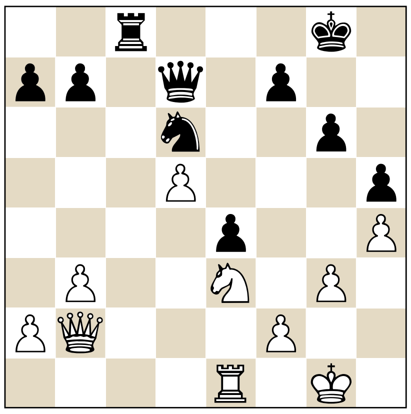
24...♖xf7 25.d5



25...♖d8! Maybe the saving move that Hikaru had missed in the first instance. 25...♘e5? loses a piece to 26.♖xb6 .

26.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 27.c4 a6 And things soon petered out to a draw.

That game was followed by three hard-fought draws, including the two blitz games, and so an Armageddon game had to bring the decision. Hikaru won the right to choose the colour and decided to pick Black. If I had had the choice, I would probably have picked White, strangely enough, so everybody was happy.

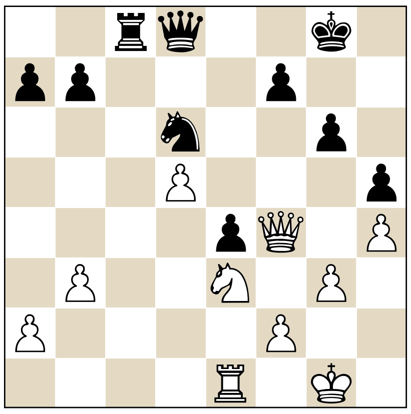


Vachier-Lagrave-Nakamura
Gibraltar 2016 (Armageddon)
position after 33...♘d6.

Things had been shaping up to my taste so far, as I kept a good advantage on the clock, and I thought I would be able to press for a long time in this position. Unfortunately, I went astray very quickly.

34.♕f6 ♕d8 35.♕f4?

Here 35.♕e5!, possibly followed by a timely g4, would have been rather difficult to face. Also, a timely ♘c4 is on the table, so both the black king's safety and the passed d-pawn could be a cause for concern.



35...♔g7

And suddenly I realized I would not be in time to play g4. If Black exchanges queens, his defence will be too easy, so I agonized about my decision and quickly collapsed.

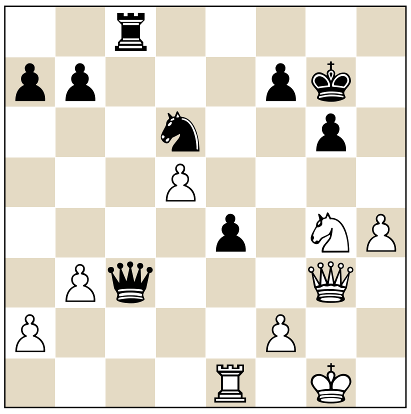
36.g4

36.♘c4 ♘xc4 37.bxc4 ♖xc4 38.♖xe4 ♖xe4 39.♕xe4 ♕d6 looked too easy for Black, but was still my best chance.

36...♕f6 37.♕g3 hxg4 38.♘xg4

38.h5 ♖h8!, and my king is in danger.

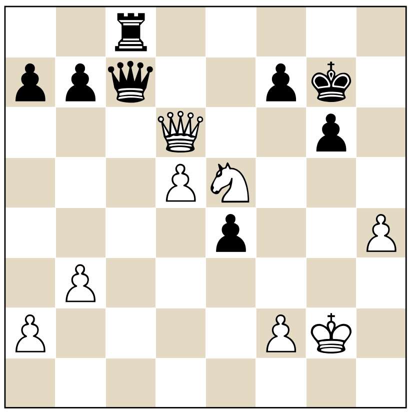
38...♕c3!



39.♕xd6

After 39.♖e3 ♕a1+ 40.♔g2 ♘f5 was the move I had missed.

39...♕xe1+ 40.♔g2 ♕c3 41.♘e5 ♕c7



Putting paid to any hope I might still have cherished and so I resigned.

Hikaru Nakamura emerged as the winner for the third time, meaning that he is no longer tied with Nigel Short for the greatest number of wins in Gibraltar!

Of course, losing another tiebreak was a bit of a heartbreaker for me (after London – ed.), but after the traditional closing dinner I chose to be satisfied with my performance and to hope that I'll be able to keep this streak going for a bit longer! ■

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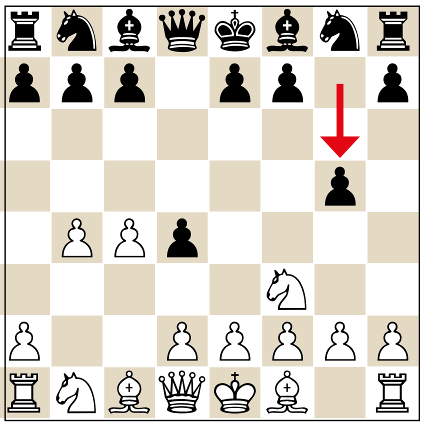


3...g5!?

The brainchild of David Navara, who was the first to play this ‘insane’ move.

In the so-called Flank Openings, Black often finds it difficult to muddy the waters. White often plays a series of solid moves like ♘f3, c4, g3, ♗g2 and 0-0, in no particular order, and takes it from there. Equalizing is perhaps not the hardest task when you are facing this, but how on earth are you going to get your opponent out of his comfort zone? Introducing an element of surprise (and fun!) would be great, of course.

That’s why we are going to investigate a bold ‘Basmanical’ ...g5 thrust in reply to one of White’s most sensible Réti-lines. The great thing about this SOS is that it was first played by David Navara – one of the most interesting 2700+ players – and that his example was mainly followed by grandmasters. Let’s interpret this as a clear sign of high quality!

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4

Black stakes a firm claim in the centre with this space-gaining advance. White may now continue in ‘Benoni-fashion’ with 3.g3 or 3.e3, but 3...♘c6 is a very decent answer in both cases, as Alexander Delchev admits in his *The Modern Réti* (Chess Stars, 2012). If White wants to avoid the natural set-up with 3...♘c6 (and has queenside ambitions of his own), he often goes

3.b4

This turns 3...♘c6 into a ridiculous reply (4.b5), which means that this ‘Volga Gambit’ (without the gambit!) is not a bad line. White aims for the set-up g3, ♗g2, 0-0, d3, and in such positions it is very useful to have already executed b2-b4.

Customary reactions are 3...f6 (building a strong centre with ...e7-e5), 3...g6 (...♗g7 and ...e7-e5), and 3...c5 (4.bxc5 ♘c6 5.d3 e5 6.g3 ♗xc5 is the idea). Black players who were feeling adventurous often went for 3...♗g4. This bishop move is, however, nowhere near as adventurous as the SOS-move I would like to advocate:

3...g5!?

The brainchild of David Navara, who was (according to my database) the first to play this ‘insane’ move. Later Morozevich wrote an inspiring article in the Informant on 3...g5. Now I could start a philosophical discussion about the biblical ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’ being applicable to chess, of course: ‘a flank move for a flank move’.

On a more serious note, however, I could point out that Navara and other strong grandmasters are merely ‘dedicated followers of modern chess fashion’: g2-g4 is definitely the way to go in many modern systems developed around the turn of the millennium. So why not ...g7-g5 ?

On an even more serious note, I could argue that 3...g5 is quite to the point strategically, aiming as it does to drive away the Réti-knight in order for Black to gain more influence in the centre (square e5), while at the same time enabling the bishop to be developed along the long diagonal. Proposing as it were 3...g5 as the superior (or 21st century) version of 3...g6.

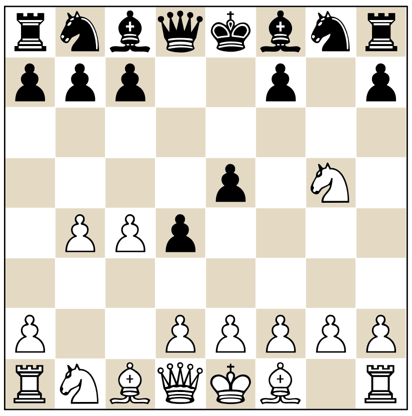
However, there is of course one point we have to discuss first and foremost: is 3...

g5 a gambit? Let's order our evidence in the following way:

Variation I – 4.♘xg5
Variation II – 4.♕a4+
Variation III – 4.♗b2 (and minor alternatives)

Variation I

4.♘xg5 The first tentative answer to our question could be that 3...g5 is not a gambit, since 4.♘xg5 is met solidly by **4...e5!**



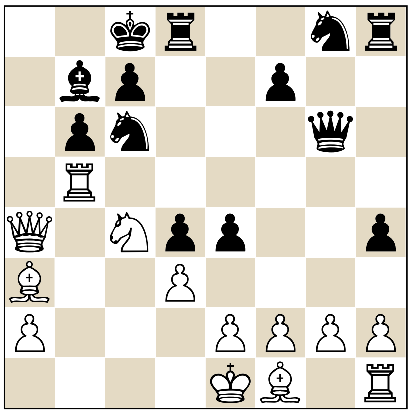
with a double attack on the g5-knight and the b4-pawn!

5.d3 Relatively best. 5.♘f3?! e4 6.♘g1 ♗xb4, and White's position is a sorry sight.

5...♗xb4+ 6.♗d2 and now the high-level blitz game Bocharov-Morozevich, Kazan 2015, took the following adventurous course:

6...♕xg5 Black is very fine after either 6...a5 or 6...♗e7. **7.♗xb4 ♘c6 8.♗a3 h5?! 9.♘d2?!** 9.h4, followed by g3, would have been better.

9...h4 10.♖b1 b6 11.♕a4 ♕g6 12.c5 ♗b7 13.♘c4 0-0-0 14.cxb6 axb6 15.♖b5 e4



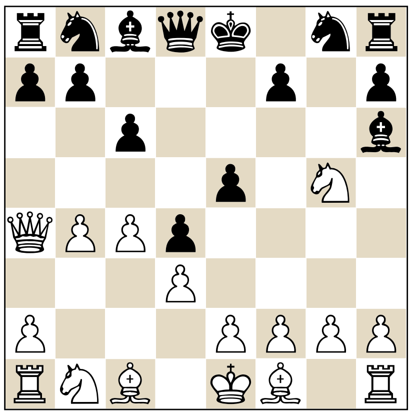
and Black was much better.

Variation II

4.♕a4+ However, what if White seriously wishes to take on g5 after all? He could in that case insert this check, when after **4...c6** the lines fork:

Variation IIa

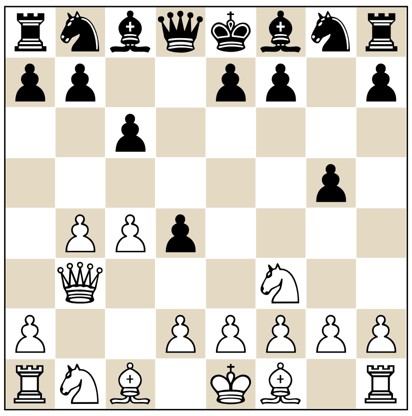
5.♘xg5 Now the pawn can be taken, although after **5...e5 6.d3** (6.♘f3 e4 7.♘g1 a5 8.b5 ♘f6 is fairly pathetic for White – how is he going to develop his kingside?) the pin
6...♗h6



forces **7.f4**, which leads to unclear play after **7...exf4 8.♘f3 ♘e7**
The hole on e3 should give Black good chances. So Black more or less by force retrieves the pawn after 4.♕a4+ c6 5.♘xe5 e5 6.d3 ♗h6!.

Variation IIb

5.♕b3



This looks clever: White has lured the c-pawn onto the natural square of the knight and is now threatening 6.♘xd4.

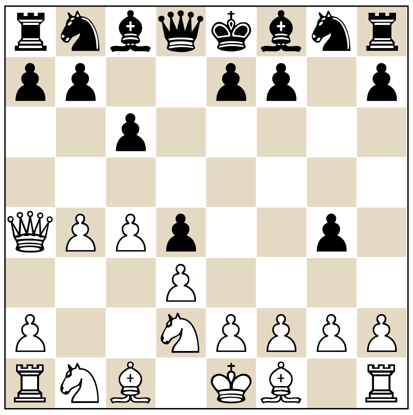
5...♗g7
A decent alternative is 5...a5 6.♘xd4 ♗g7 (not 6...axb4?! 7.♘c2) 7.e3 axb4 8.♗b2 (8.♕xb4?! ♘a6!) 8...e5 9.♘c2 ♘a6 10.♘xb4 ♘c5, with proper compensation for the pawn.

6.♘xg5 e5 7.♕g3 ♘e7 8.♘e4 Perhaps 8.♘e6!? ♗xe6 9.♕xg7 is better, though.

8...♘f5 9.♕g5 ♕xg5 10.♘xg5 a5 11.bxa5 ♘d6 12.d3 h6 13.♘f3 ♖xa5, and Black again had a fair amount of compensation (and won) in Matsenko-Andriasyan, Nizhny Tagil 2014.

Variation IIc

5.d3 This was Markowski's choice in the stem game. **5...g4 6.♘fd2**



6...♗g7 Black should be fine following 6...e5!. **7.g3 h5!? 8.h4 b5 9.cxb5 ♕d5 10.♖g1 cxb5 11.♕c2 ♗b7 12.a4!** was slightly better for White in Markowski-Navara, Wroclaw 2011.

Variation III

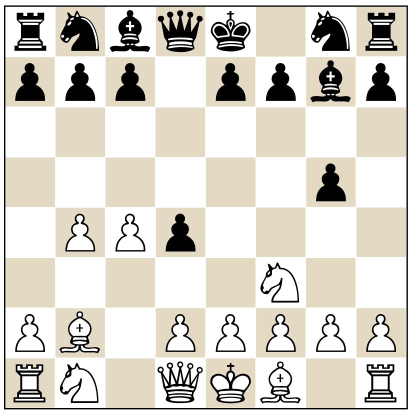
4.♗b2 When confronted with 3...g5 in practice (something that admittedly doesn't occur all that often), White has usually responded with this developing move – with good reason as regards our question (is 3...g5 a gambit), as we will see.
Let's first investigate two minor alternatives:
– The meek 4.d3 plays into Black's hands. After 4...g4 5.♘fd2 e5 6.♕b3 a5! 7.b5 ♘d7 8.e3?! ♘c5 9.♕c2 Black played 9...♗f5! to provoke 10.e4, when 10...♗e6 11.♘b3 a4 12.♘xc5 ♗xc5 13.♗e2 ♘e7 14.♗g5 ♖g8 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♘d2 h5 gave Black superior chances on both flanks! Frisk-Shyam, Gibraltar 2015.
– 4.h3 at least prevents 4...g4, so it

isn't bad. In Jürgens-Kunin, Bad Wiessee 2015, a pretty unclear game arose after 4...h6 5.d3 (5.♗b2 ♗g7 6.e3!? e5) 5...♗g7 (5...e5!) 6.♘bd2 e5 7.♗b2 ♘e7 8.g3 ♗e6 (8...0-0) 9.♗g2 ♕c8?! 10.♘b3 c6 11.♕d2 (11.♘c5!) 11...0-0.

– Both 4.d3 and 4.h3 aren't critical for the evaluation of 3...g5 of course.

The main move (4.♗b2) forces

4...♗g7

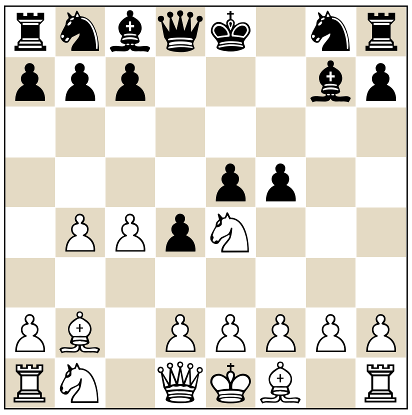


and now White can safely (at least for the moment) take that intrepid pawn on g5.

5.♘xg5

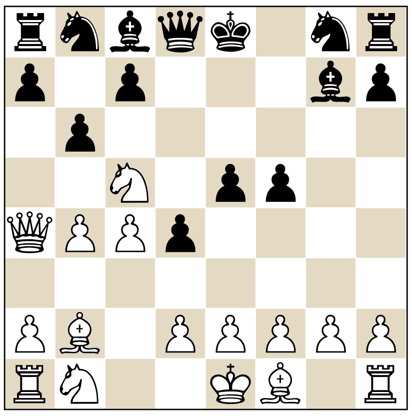
Illogical (and bad) is 5.e4 e5 (also strong is 5...g4) 6.d3 g4 7.♘fd2 ♘e7 8.g3 h5 9.h3, and now 9...gxh3 (Condori-Perez Gormaz, Antofagasta 2016) would have been even better than the game continuation 9...♘g6 10.hxg4 h4, with excellent chances on the dark squares.

5...e5 6.♘e4 Awkward for White is 6.♘f3 e4 7.♘g1. **6...f5**



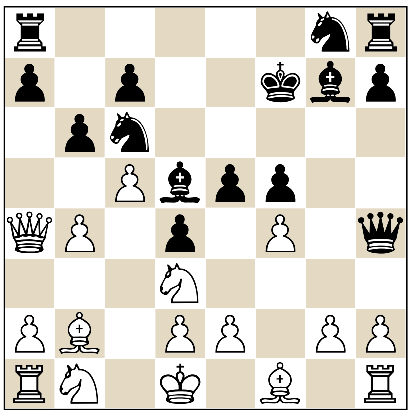
And so I refer the honourable reader back to the question we asked some moments ago. Indeed, we may now safely say that 3...g5 is a gambit! However, even optically the compensation that Black's massive pawn centre provides is quite striking.

7.♘g3 Also plausible is 7.♘c5 (the knight isn't all that well-placed on g3 after all). 7...b6 8.♕a4+:



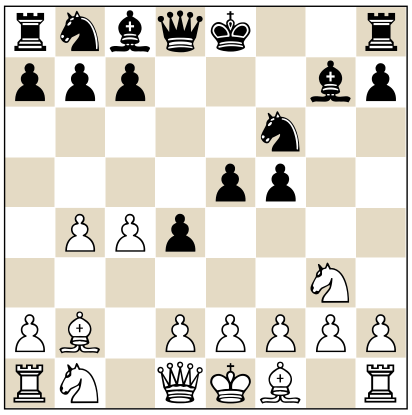
– 8...c6 9.♘b3 (again 9.♘d3 is the alternative) 9...♘e7 10.e3 0-0 11.c5 b5 12.♕a5 ♕e8 (12...♕d5!) 13.♘a3 ♘d5 14.♘c2 ♗e6 15.exd4 e4 16.0-0-0 ♘d7, and Black had sufficient positional compensation for his two pawns, Iturrizaga-Sulskis, Tromsø Olympiad 2014.

– Black can also play 8...♔f7 to keep the long diagonal open. White should go 9.♘d3!? (9.♘b3 ♗b7 looks pretty OK for Black), and now either the sane 9...♘e7, or 9...♗b7 10.c5 (10.e3!?) 10...♗d5 11.f4!? (11.e3) 11...♕h4+ (11...♘d7 12.c6 e4) 12.♔d1 ♘c6,



which leads to crazy complications.

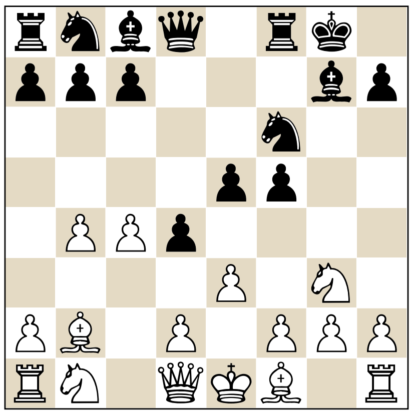
7...♘f6



In practice White now either attacked Black's centre with 8.e3, or tried to constrain it with 8.d3.

Variation IIIa

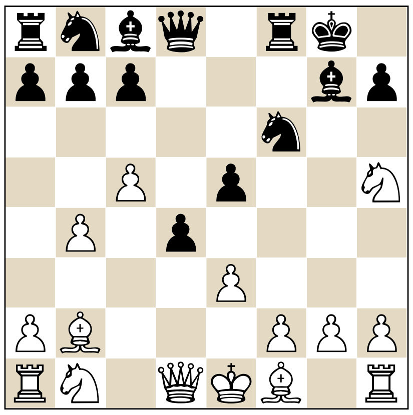
8.e3 0-0



In my opinion, this is a highly problematic position for White. Black's edge in development, his strong pawn centre and White's awkward knight on g3 give Black ample compensation for the missing g-pawn.

– Let's first note that capturing with 9.exd4 exd4 is bad for White: 10.♗d3 (10.♗e2? d3 11.♗f3 f4 and 10.d3 ♕e7+ are even worse) 10...♖e8+ 11.♘e2 ♘c6, with a dangerous initiative.

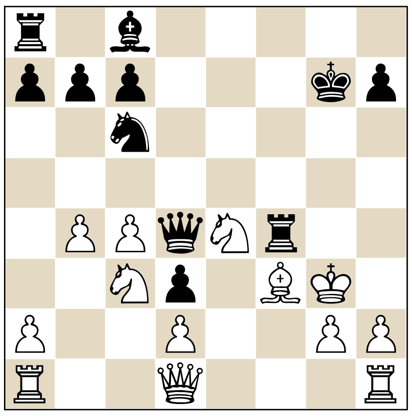
– 9.c5 aims to develop the bishop with check, but 9...f4! is too strong: 10.♘h5 (or 10.exf4 exf4 11.♗c4+ ♔h8 12.♘e2 d3, and now the problem is that 13.♘xf4 fails to 13...♕e7+ 14.♔f1 ♕e4, with a double attack) 10...fxe3 11.dxe3 (11.fxe3 ♘xh5 12.♕xh5 ♖f5 13.♗c4+ ♔h8 14.♕e2 ♘c6, and with b4 hanging and his king in the middle White is suffering) was Forster-Prusikin, Switzerland 2015,



NEW IN CHESS * TRAINING *

when 11...♘g4! (instead of the game continuation 11...♘xh5 12.♗c4+ ♔h8 13.♕xh5) would have more or less finished White off: 12.♘xg7 (12.♗e2 ♕h4; 12.♗c4+ ♔h8 13.0-0 ♕h4) 12...♔xg7 just wins for Black.

– At the rapid World Championship in Berlin, Agrest played 9.♗d3. Now 9...e4, followed by 10...d3, is tempting, and 9...f4, as in Forster-Prusikin above, would have been strong too. Instead Morozevich played 9...♘g4 when the retreat 10.♗e2 was best. High entertainment value was now provided by Morozevich when he went for the dubious 10...♘xf2?! (10...♕h4 11.♗xg4 fxg4). After 11.♔xf2 f4 12.exf4 d3 13.♗f3 e4 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♘xe4 ♕d4+ 16.♔g3 (now 16...♕xa1 17.♘bc3 ♕xd1 18.♖xd1, with a safe edge for White, was not to the Russian's liking, which explains:) 16...♘c6? 17.♘bc3 ♖xf4!



and now Agrest could have won by not taking on f4 – instead it all ended peacefully after 18.♔xf4? ♕e5+ 19.♔e3 ♕d4+ 20.♔f4 ♕e5+ 21.♔e3, Agrest-Morozevich, Berlin rapid 2015.

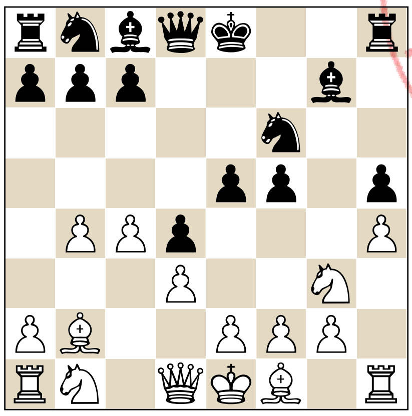
Variation IIIb

8.d3 h5!

Attaboy! Black goes all out for the attack, although the positional 8...f4 9.♘e4 ♘xe4 10.dxe4 0-0 wasn't bad either.

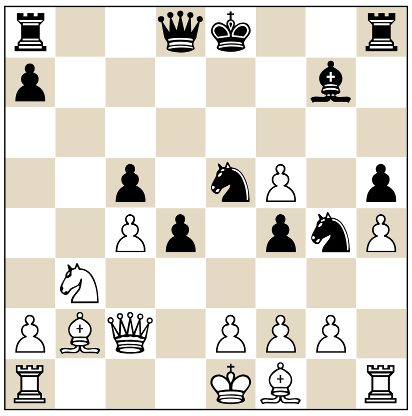
9.h4

Otherwise 9...h4 will be very annoying. But this clearly weakens the g4-square.



Now the objective part of our article may end with the conclusion that Black is to be preferred after 9...f4 10.♘e4 ♘xe4 11.dxe4 ♗e6. Black has an edge in development, more space and better pieces. Morphy would have given much more than just a g-pawn for such a position. However, in fact, Stefan Bromberger, who was Black in this game, decided that he also wanted to sac much more than a mere g-pawn. The game now took a crazy course, providing great entertainment for the observers (us)!

9...♘g4!? 10.♘d2 e4?! 11.dxe4 f4! 12.♘f5 ♗xf5 13.exf5 ♘c6 14.b5 ♘ce5 15.♕c2 c6?! 16.bxc6 bxc6 17.♘b3 c5



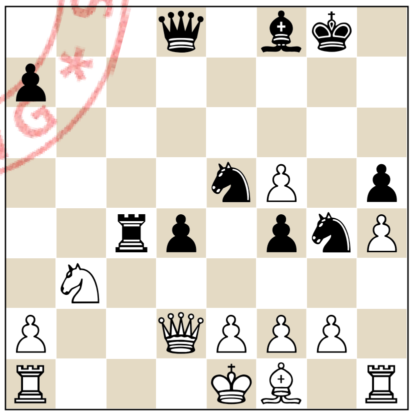
Black's play isn't all that crazy as I made out, though. White continues to have problems finding a safe haven for his king, and how to develop that bishop on f1?

18.♗a3?! 0-0

Bromberger was apparently in no mood for a 'safe' move like 18...♖c8.

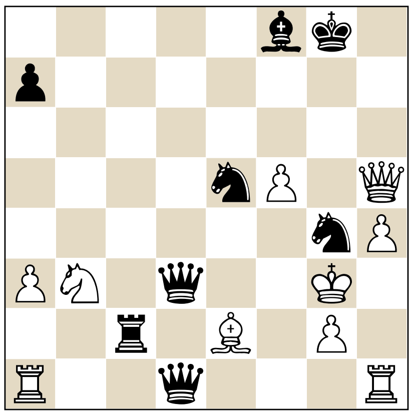
19.♗xc5 ♖c8 20.♗xf8 ♖xc4 21.♕d2 ♗xf8

Since all these sacrifices were obviously Bromberger's intention, there isn't much point in giving engine lines. For a non-silicon being, White's position is very very difficult to defend.



Forced now was 22.a3, when Black can keep the fire burning with moves like 22...♕b6, 22...♕c8 or 22...♗e7, in all cases with great (practical) compensation.

22.e3? Finally opening up the diagonal for the bishop (1.e4 next time?), but tragically Black has **22...d3!**, when he is completely winning. Enjoy the resulting massacre! **23.a3 fxe3 24.fxe3 ♖c2 25.♕d1 ♘xe3 26.♕xh5 d2+ 27.♔f2 d1♕+ 28.♗e2 ♘3g4+ 29.♔g3 ♕8d3+**



and White resigned in Christiansen-Bromberger, Doha 2015.

A picturesque final position. It is mate after both 30.♗xd3 ♕xd3+ 31.♔f4 ♕e3, and 30.♗f3 ♖xg2+ 31.♔xg2 ♕3xf3.

Conclusion

3...g5 appears to be highly playable for those who would like to 'outflank' their opponent (and liven things up considerably) in the Réti. White can turn 3...g5 into a real gambit by playing 4.♗b2 ♗g7, and only now 5.♘xg5. However, Black will get very real compensation in the form of a strong pawn centre and an advantage in development. Perhaps White is best advised to give a check with 4.♕a4+, looking for unclear play after 4...c6. ■

Hans Ree

A blast from the past against Euwe

Last year, the Dutch researcher Peter de Jong published a three-volume compilation of games and stories about Max Euwe: *Max Euwe – Verhalen en partijen*. Soon after this worthy tribute an intriguing letter from 1939 appeared on a Dutch website, written by a chess journalist who obviously hated Euwe.

In his first volume, Peter de Jong describes a simul that Euwe played near the end of his life, on March 3, 1981, in Amsterdam at the club US, which I think stood for Unitas Studiosorum, a student's club.

In his game against a certain E. Hubert, an endgame of queen and pawn (for Euwe) vs queen arose after White's 44th move. De Jong has checked the endgame with a tablebase, and it was a draw then.

With all other games finished, Hubert was on his own and couldn't spend much time on his moves. Euwe had declared that the game was theoretically won, but this was before tablebases. According to the tablebase, Hubert had played perfectly till move 109, which I find an almost incredible achievement. This man should play the lottery, as the hand of God is clearly with him. After his mistake on move 109 the game was objectively lost, but on move 125 it was declared a draw, although the position was winning for Euwe.

It was 1.00 a.m. and nobody could really have been sure about the correct evaluation. Now the tablebase says that with optimum play from both sides Euwe would win (that is: mate) in 44 moves. They had been playing the queen ending for 82 moves. Surely the great old man, two months before his eightieth birthday, needed to go home.

But he was probably not happy. While preparing his books on Euwe, De Jong had called for games from Euwe's simuls to be sent to him. Unsurprisingly, he received many losses by Euwe from proud winners and only a handful of wins. Not all correspondents had a positive view of Euwe's behaviour. After a loss he apparently sometimes angrily scattered the pieces and was not always very approachable then.

After the simul at the student's club Euwe received a copy of a jubilee book entitled *Neuken is lekkerder, 10 jaar uit de turbulente historie van US Schaken* (Fucking is nicer, 10 years from the turbulent history of US Chess), and he gracefully turned it into a joke by saying that he wasn't sure if he could come home with that book.

What did the students think when they presented Euwe with that book? Perhaps that he would be shocked. Young people like to think that sex was invented by their generation, and even knowing that they cannot have come into this world by parthenogenesis, they find it hard to accept this.

Military analysis

Having parted with half of my chess library because of lack of space, I have become resourceful in finding accessible storage, and there is still room for some big books that appeared recently, e.g. the biography of Ignaz Kolisch by Fabrizio Zavatarelli and even the huge new edition of the biography of Mikhail Chigorin by Jimmy Adams. De Jong's work about Euwe is the biggest of them all. Volume 1 is a hotchpotch of games and stories, while volumes 2A and 2B present all games by Euwe that could be found. I bought volume 1; as to 2A and 2B, their presence in the library of the Max Euwe Centre is good enough for me.

Browsing the latter volumes, I was impressed by the range of the research. Euwe-Najdorf, Mar del Plata 1947, annotated by a certain Captain J.J. Luchte in *Het Lichtspoor* (The Trailing Light), a weekly magazine for the Dutch military forces. How does one find that?

A large part of volume 1 consists of short biographies of Euwe's opponents, some of them famous, many of them not. One of the latter was about Willem Andreas Theodorus Schelfhout (1874-1951), also known as WATS. He was a strong player who represented the Netherlands in three Olympiads, but he was mainly known as a chess journalist.

De Jong writes: 'It has been alleged that Euwe and Schelfhout didn't get on, but there are no indications to think so.'

And he quotes Euwe himself: 'Schelfhout is the liveliest person I have ever met. He is always cheerful and has a very witty turn of phrase. Schelfhout is a born journalist who can regale you with the most enjoyable stories about completely non-existent people. Sometimes we poke fun at WATS's more than moderate appetite (I once saw him demolish four steaks in one sitting), but everyone is well-disposed towards him, and vice versa, and there's always a bit of bantering going on.'

Venomous praise

Good clean fun. But then, on January 2 of this year, Teun Koorevaar, one of the regular contributors of the Dutch website *schaaksite.nl*, published an article with the intriguing title *Max Euwe: Een kater in de liefde?* (Max Euwe: A love hangover?) that paints a less rosy picture of the relationship between WATS and Euwe.

The article mainly consists of long excerpts from a letter that WATS wrote in 1939 to his brother Lodewijk Schelfhout, an artist who knew some chess players. No trace of the good-natured joker here; when he writes about Euwe, his condescending tone – 'I know little Max like the back of my hand' – suggests a real antipathy.

Euwe is described as a shrewd diplomat who would set his sail to every wind, provided some financial gain could be had. His wife Caro is damned by faint praise: 'Before I go on, I want to express the great admiration that I feel for his high-minded wife [...]. She dislikes everyone who doesn't admire her husband, or doesn't write admiringly about him. To her, he is the best chess player, the best chess writer, the best chess speaker, the best husband... provided she doesn't leave him out of sight for one moment.'

Schelfhout goes on about Euwe after his loss in the return match of 1937: 'Moreover Euwe – but this is something that only his wife and a few insiders know – suffered a hangover in love. Many a woman who finds out time and again that her husband gives his love to others, would give up on him. This woman seeks solace in prayer, but she stays faithful to him, follows him day and night, travels with him to the Dutch Indies, Sweden, Austria, everywhere where danger threatens. She cannot prevent him hiring a female secretary, but she will drive the car when the woman has to be brought home, for she knows how much evil the car already has caused.'

'To her, he is the best chess player, the best chess writer, the best chess speaker, the best husband... provided she doesn't leave him out of sight for one moment.'

The whole of Schelfhout's letter is a litany against Euwe and his friends. The committee that had organized Euwe's matches against Alekhine was a bunch of crooks. Decent people had been removed from the Dutch chess world and the Euwe clique had taken over.

Journalist's battle

WATS even tells an anecdote from 16 years earlier, in 1923, when he, Euwe and Euwe's friend, the great chess writer Evert Straat, were at the tournament in Mährisch Ostrau (won by Emanuel Lasker) as journalists for various Dutch newspapers. He writes: 'For three days my telegrams did not arrive. It became necessary to send them from a neighbouring town, and then everything worked fine. What became clear later? The gentlemen (WATS means Euwe and Straat, whom, by the way, he called 'a godless critic') had slandered me at the post office. Another example of which I could tell dozens.'

Many years ago I heard a different version of Straat's journalistic coverage of Mährisch Ostrau. In this version he didn't have the money to travel and stayed in Amsterdam, where he telephoned his 'eyewitness reports' to his newspaper from a café located in the same street. Both versions seem equally incredible to me. WATS has bluntly been called a liar by the Dutch IM Hans Bouwmeester, who was born in 1929, became a good friend of Euwe's and must have spoken to many of WATS's contemporaries.

But what about the malicious tale of the long-suffering Mrs. Euwe and the philandering Max? It's true that the good Mrs. Euwe prayed a lot and became a cheerful Christian Scientist. It is also true that in his later life Euwe sometimes was outspoken about his extra-marital transgressions, and I myself remember a newspaper interview near the end of his life in which he talked mournfully about his waning sexual powers and said: 'I am not a Picasso.'

Euwe was a multi-faceted man. He played the violin, he could fly a small aeroplane, as a youngster he carried a gun on his walks from his home to the chess club and back, and yes, I think he was also a ladies' man. ■

Parimarjan's Chess Gym

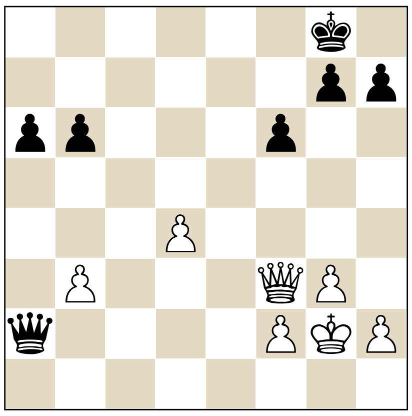
A short course on Queen and Pawn Endgames

Who likes studying queen and pawn endings when they so often end in perpetual check? It seems almost impossible for a hapless king to escape from the range of an all-powerful queen. Yet **Parimarjan Negi** believes you should know some rules of thumb to win or draw such endgames.

There are various reasons why we are not too eager to study queen and pawn endgames and prefer to deal with them only when they appear on the board, mindlessly trying to give a perpetual as the solution to every problem. One reason is that there are just so many possibilities when a queen starts checking the king! Most people find it impossible to calculate these options and when you analyse such games with engines, even the very best players often don't seem to know what they are doing.

Still, as in every endgame, there are a number of classic ideas that can really make your life so much easier. And in this kind of endgame, which you won't see too often, once you know these ideas, you don't really need to know much more.

To begin with, we'll look at a classic winning strategy that I am sure all of you have seen: with a safe king and an extra pawn. One of the most common strategies for the side with the extra pawn, particularly when it's a passer, is to keep the king safe by preventing any possibility of a check – often by putting the queen perfectly on one of the long diagonals. And then you just keep pushing the pawn. This can be incredibly effective.



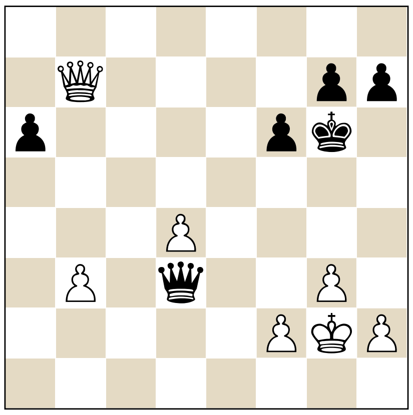
Kovalenko-Shimanov
Wroclaw 2014
position after 28.exd4

Equal material, a queen and pawn endgame... Should be an easy draw? Actually, yes, but Black makes a big tactical mistake. He should have kept his queen close to the e4-square in order to be able to go for a perpetual if the white queen tries to go after the black pawns.

28...♕d2? Correct was 28...♕c2!. Getting the queen on the g2-a8 diagonal was the right defensive strategy.

29.♕d5+! ♔f8 30.♕d8+ ♔f7 31.♕xb6 Suddenly White is a pawn up, and now Black is doomed to a long passive defence. He starts looking for a perpetual...

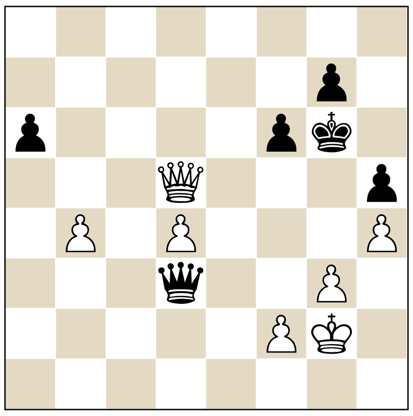
31...♕d3 32.♕b7+ ♔g6



33.♕d5!

The perfect square for the queen, since it prevents any checks against the white king, while defending all the pawns. The drawback, of course, is that White himself can't push the d-pawn yet, but he will soon be able to do so after securing his king's position.

33...h5 34.h4 ♔h6 35.b4 ♔g6



36.♕c5! He has found a new great square for the queen. The white king will move to h2 – and then, after d5, the queen will defend the f2-pawn, preventing all checks. Again a very typical idea that is worth knowing...

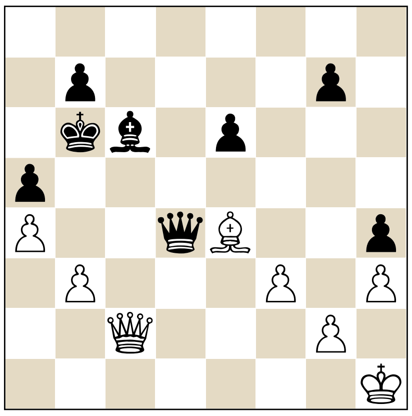
36...♕e4+ 37.♔h2 ♕f3 38.d5

It's such mental torture to play a position that doesn't seem to give you any chance of generating counterplay.

38...♔f7 39.♕a7+ ♔e8 40.d6 ♕e2 41.♕c5 ♕g4 42.♕c6+ ♕d7 43.♕xa6 And soon it was all over (1-0, 48).

The best attacking idea: chase the pawns!

There can be many reasons why it is impossible to keep your king safely cocooned inside – maybe your opponent forced you out, or maybe you don't have a clear passed pawn, so you need to venture out into the wilderness. One of the most important ideas for the attacker is to chase pawns! Yes, you heard it right. Even though the queens are on the board, one of the best ways to use the king is to chase your opponent's pawns. This is because the defending queen will find it hard to give checks and defend the pawns at the same time! Thus, your opponent will either have to stop giving checks, giving you time to improve your queen or pawn, or you can happily collect the pawns.



Matlakov-Kramnik
Doha 2015
position after 50.♗e4

50...♗d5!

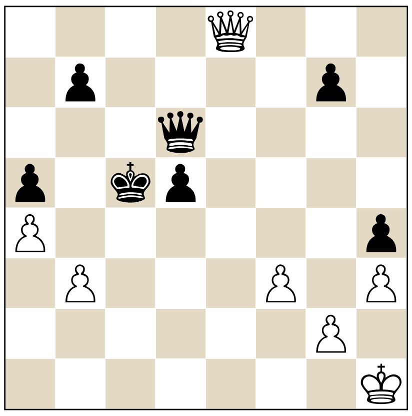
Not a queen ending yet, but this move is so beautiful that I had to mention it. Kramnik realizes that ending with equal pawns and queens is definitely not drawn – especially if Black can get a passed pawn.

> 'Even though the queens are on the board, one of the best ways to use the king is to chase your opponent's pawns.'

51.♔h2 ♕e3 52.♗xd5 A little naive. It's always tempting to go for a queen and pawn ending and look for a perpetual, but it's so much harder than it seems. 52.♗d3 should be drawish, but Black is trying.

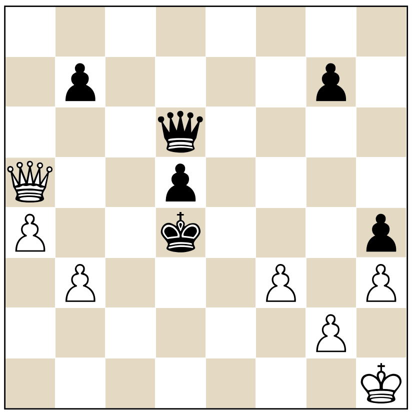
52...♕e5+ 53.♔h1 exd5 54.♕c8 ♕e1+ 55.♔h2 ♕e5+ 56.♔h1 ♕d6 A simple move – getting ready to push the pawn.

57.♕e8 ♔c5! The king needs to come into the game fearlessly!



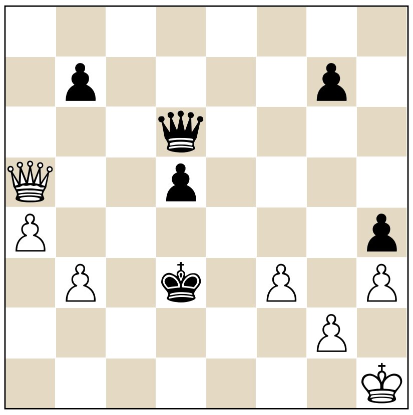
58.♕b5+ Best was 58.♕e1!, but it's amazingly hard not to give a nice check when you can. Now 58...♔d4 is met by 59.♕d2+!, while 58...b6 would be no fun after 59.♕c3 mate. So Black would have to play 58...♔b6 and then look for another way to push the pawn.

58...♔d4 59.♕xa5



59...♔d3!

An amazing move, and very hard to anticipate! The black king freely walks among the white pawns and can take shelter there or just collect them all.



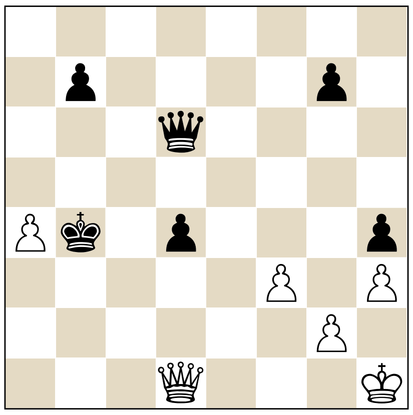
60.♕b5+ ♔c3 61.♕a5+ ♔c2!

No rush to take the pawns.

62.♕e1 d4

62...♕f4! was an even nicer move, completely avoiding checks. Eventually the black queen will be able to hide behind the white pawns and win with the d-pawn. Instead, Kramnik goes for the classical chase after the opponent's pawns.

63.♕e2+ ♔xb3 64.♕d1+ ♔b4



The classic chase-the-pawns set-up. Give a check – lose a pawn!

65.♕b1+ ♔xa4 66.♕xb7 d3

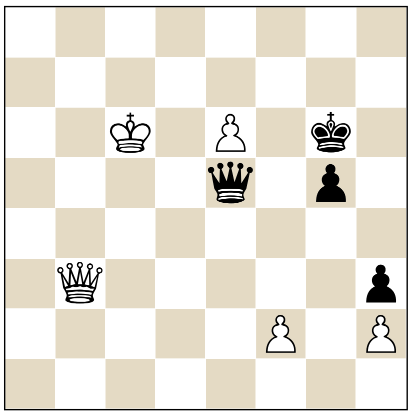
Not too many checks around now.

67.♕b2 d2 68.♕a2+ ♔b5 69.♕b2+ ♕b4 70.♕c2 ♕d4 71.♕b3+ ♔c5 72.♕c2+ ♔b4 73.♕d1 ♕b2 White resigned.

Checking: the classic mistake

As said, one of the classic mistakes in queen and pawn endgames is checking without a clear plan. It doesn't always suite the defender to check, unless he

sees a forced draw. But we tend to get so enamoured by the idea of finding a perpetual that we keep checking on auto-pilot, while the number of possibilities increases so fast that it's usually impossible to calculate the consequences. Here is a classic example of clueless play in such an endgame by myself.

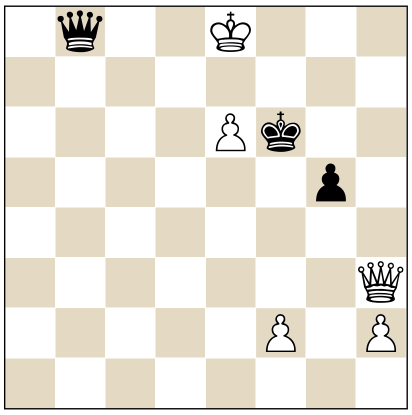


Tomashevsky-Negi
Biel 2010
position after 64.♔c6

64...♕e4+?

Forcing White to improve his queen. It doesn't lose the game, but shows that I had no idea what I was doing. I was desperately looking for a perpetual.

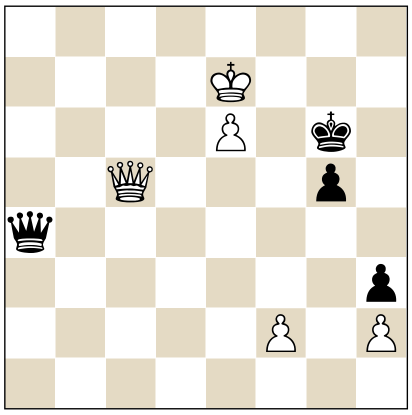
Instead, 64...♔f6! would have been a nice invitation for White to misplace his queen: 65.♔d7 (after the immediate 65.♕xh3 Black should draw after 65...♕e4+ – 65...♕xe6+, incidentally, is also an easy draw, but this was not necessary) 65...♕d4+ 66.♔e8 ♕e5 67.♕xh3 ♕b8+.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The queen is horribly placed on h3 and giving a perpetual would be child's play. Note that this kind of idea isn't even about calculation. I did my best to calculate the lines after 64...♕e4+, but I couldn't find an easy way to escape the checks. But here you can see that the queen is so much worse on h3. You know without calculating that White won't escape the checks. In the same vein, with the white queen comfortably on d5 – as in the game – you can assume that the king will almost certainly escape.

65.♕d5! ♕a4+ 66.♔d6 ♕a6+ 67.♕c6 ♕a3+ 68.♕c5 ♕a6+ 69.♔d7 ♕a4+ 70.♔d8 ♕a8+ 71.♔d7 ♕a4+ 72.♔e7



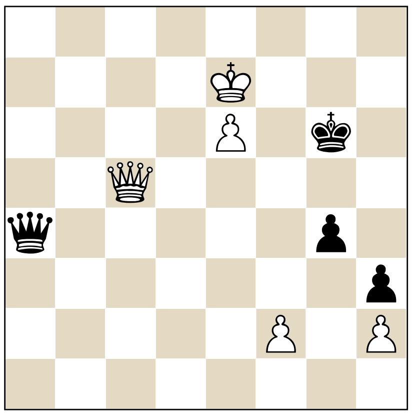
And the king escapes. I remember starting to panic at this point... Not giving check felt so strange.

72...g4 73.♔d8!

A beautiful triangulating idea to lose a move.

73...♕d1+ 74.♔e8 ♕a4+ 75.♔e7

Zugzwang? As usual, not giving check is hard.



75...♕e4

75...♕b3 would have saved the game, according to mysterious computer calculations – but can you imagine finding such ideas during a practical game?

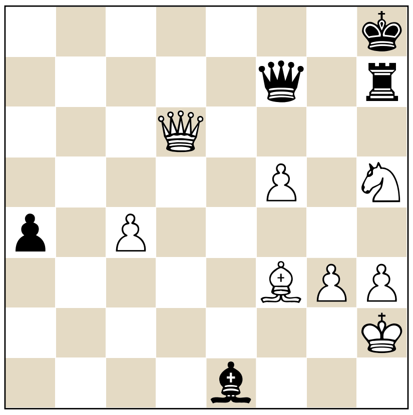
76.♕b5 ♔h6 77.♔d6 ♕f4+ 78.♕e5 ♕xf2 79.e7

And White won soon (1-0, 94).

I was already a strong grandmaster, but I still desperately wanted to just check. But if you don't see a precise and forced way to make a draw – don't do it! And most importantly – don't panic. Often you are only helping the enemy king to find to a better place, or allowing your opponent to improve the position of his queen. Thus, it can be much easier to find a drawing strategy that doesn't involve too much calculation – for instance, trying to block his pawn.

Counterplay is the best defence

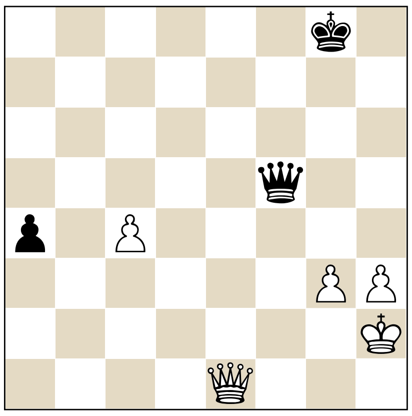
As we've seen, the progress for the better side is often quite slow in such endgames. You can't blindly push your pawn or capture enemy ones, because you also need to keep your king safe and avoid the many tactical possibilities the enemy queen can create. Thus, the best defence often is creating a passed pawn, as this will enable you to keep pushing the pawn with impunity. It's really hard to stop a combo of a pawn + a queen.



Zhou Weiqi-Wei Yi
Tianjin 2013
position after 50.♕d6

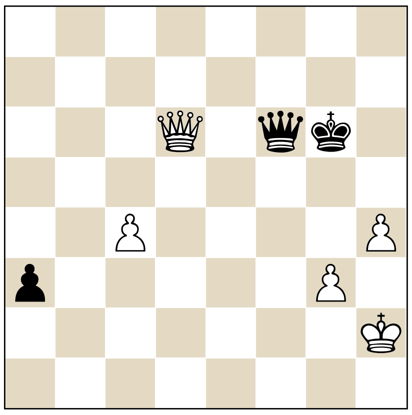
White seems to be close to winning. After 50...♖xh5, Black will just be a few pawns down after all...

50...♖xh5! 51.♗xh5 ♕xh5 52.♕e5+ ♔h7 53.♕e7+ ♔g8 54.♕xe1 ♕xf5



Black correctly assessed that having just one passed pawn is far more important than having more pawns. The queen and pawn combo is really powerful in these endgames. White can't protect against perpetual checks and keep the a-pawn under control at the same time.

55.♕e8+ ♔g7 56.♕e7+ ♔g6 57.♕d6+ ♕f6 58.♕d3+ ♕f5 59.♕d6+ ♕f6 60.♕d3+ ♕f5 61.♕d2 a3 62.h4 ♕f6 63.♕d3+ ♕f5 64.♕d6+ ♕f6

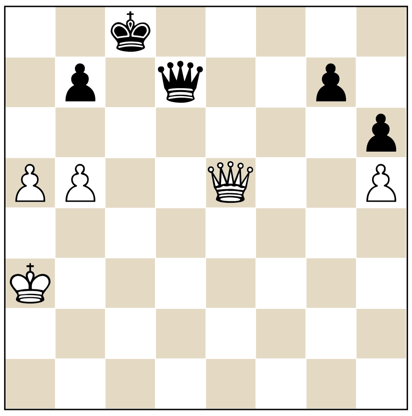


65.h5+ 65.♕xa3 ♕f2+ 66.♔h3 ♕f1+ would be a perpetual.

65...♔g5 66.♕xa3

And as 66...♕f2+ would lead to a perpetual again, a draw was agreed.

From the perspective of the attacker, the possibility of a passed pawn is far more important than a few checks. The passed pawn, after all, is usually permanent, whereas you can often escape from many checks. Unfortunately, I didn't realize this before the following painful game, which taught me another important lesson: don't calculate too much!

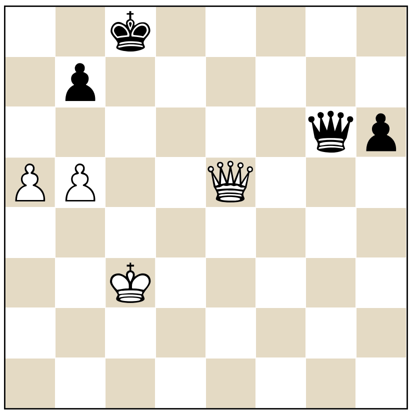


Negi-Thejkumar
Jalgaon 2013
position after 43...♔c8

I had completely outplayed him – and here I felt I was close to winning. Black's king is stuck, and a queen exchange would lead to a winning king and pawn ending for White. So I thought about 44.b6 for a while, but I wasn't sure if he wouldn't find a draw somewhere. In the end I felt I was being smart when I played:

44.♔b4? The problem was again that I was trying to calculate too much instead of just playing a move. Calculating in such endgames is hard – particularly questions like 'Will the king be able to escape the checks or not?' But I should have noticed his idea.

44...g5!! 45.hxg6 ♕g4+ 46.♔c3 ♕xg6



The black h-pawn doesn't look so advanced, but it's really useful. Now he can exchange queens if he wants. He drew easily, of course (½-½, 55).

Conclusion:

Although it's not very appealing – as well as practically impossible – to study queen and pawn endings exhaustively, there are useful ideas that you should be familiar with:

– Both attacker and defender are better served by a clear plan than by mindlessly checking in the hope of forcing their opponent to make a mistake or allow perpetual check.

– The attacker should keep in mind that going after his opponent's pawns is a useful way to run away from checks.

– The defender should keep in mind that, even if he is material down, one passed pawn may be a huge trump. ■

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NEW IN CHESS

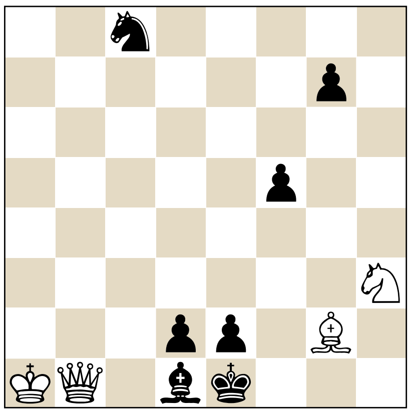
In front row main sponsor Oleg Skvortsov and his wife Natalia follow the games. On the right Jan Timman and his wife Geertje.

New time control same winner

Hikaru Nakamura tops Zurich Chess Challenge

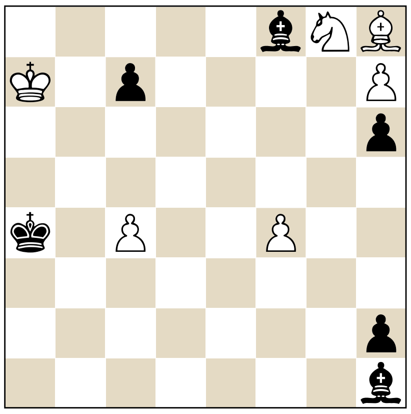
For the fifth Zurich Chess Challenge main sponsor Oleg Skvortsov introduced a new time control. The Russian businessman is convinced that if you want to attract a broader audience, games should not last much longer than two hours. **JAN TIMMAN** looks at the pros and cons, but before he takes you to Zurich, he presents an award-winning study that was the reason he travelled to Switzerland in the first place.

Composing endgame studies is not an activity restricted by time or place. You can work at your leisure, without the pressure of chess clocks or deadlines. This is how I worked on the 'Bristol theme' or, more precisely, the 'Loyd's counter-clearance', more than two years ago. The theme may be defined as follows: 'A piece making way for a like-moving piece to barrel down the same line or diagonal'. The latter term is based on the following problem:



S. Loyd
Cincinnati Dispatch 1858
White to play – Mate in 3 moves

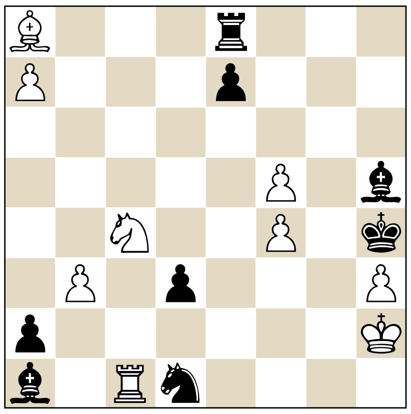
The key move is **1.♗a8!**
The way for the queen to b7 is cleared, so White intends to mate on h1 if Black moves his g-pawn.
If Black plays his knight, then square b6 becomes available for the queen and mate follows on g1.
On 1...f4 finally, White has 2.♕g6.
Studies with Loyd's counter-clearance have been around for almost a century. An old example:



Salkind 1927
White to play and draw

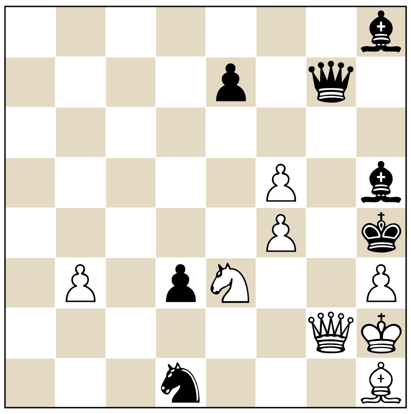
Both bishops must travel along the entire length of the long diagonal to prepare for the queening of the pawn. **1.♗a1 ♗a8 2.h8♕ h1♕ 3.♕b2** The point of the first move. Mate on b7 had to be prevented. **3...♕c6 4.♕c2+ ♔b4 5.♕c3+ ♔c5 6.♕d4+** With perpetual check.

I had set out to compose a study in which both players' queens and bishops would travel the length of the diagonal. In addition, both players would have to sacrifice a rook on the queening square, and there would have to be a few attractive points in the final phase. I had been working on it for at least a week when in February 2014, I arrived in Zurich to attend the Chess Challenge in the Savoy hotel, which was won by Magnus Carlsen. There I managed to finish my study. I was so taken by the result that I decided to dedicate it to the host and hostess of the tournament. I wrote the study, together with a dedication, down for them on Savoy Hotel notepaper.



Timman 2015
White to play and win
For Oleg and Natalia Skvortsov

The main line goes as follows:
1.♗c6 ♖a8!
The first rook sac. After 1...♗d4 2.♗xe8 ♗xa7 3.♗xh5 ♔xh5 4.♖xd1 White would have an easy win.
2.♗xa8 ♗d4 3.♖a1!
The white rook sac. Insufficient for the win was 3.♗e4 ♗xa7 4.♖a1 ♗b8! 5.♔g2 ♘c3 6.♗xd3 ♗xf4 7.b4 ♗f7!, and White is left short of material.
3...♗xa1
Black is forced to accept the sacrifice, since 3...♘c3 will fail to 4.f6! exf6 5.♘d6, and wins.
4.♗h1! ♗h8! 5.a8♕ a1♕ 6.♕g2! ♕g7!
Symmetrical movements. Mate has been averted, but White has a way to keep the black king under fire.
7.♘e3!
Preventing the queen swap and threatening mate. Now there are two main lines:



Variation A
7...♗e8 8.♕f3!
Insufficient was 8.♘g4 in view of 8...♕b2!, with a queen swap.
8...♗c6 9.f6! ♕g6 10.♘g2+ ♕xg2+ 11.♕xg2 ♗xg2 12.fxe7
And wins.

Variation B
7...♗e2 8.♘g4! ♔h5 9.♕g3 ♘e3 10.♕xe3 ♗xg4 11.f6!
Again this annoying intermediate move that interferes with the defence.
11...exf6 12.hxg4+
And the black king has been caught in a mating net.

My study was awarded first prize in the tournament in honour of the

80th birthday of Albert Beliavsky (not to be confused with chess player Alexander). Albert is famous for his magnificent studies, some in cooperation with Mitrofanov. I felt greatly honoured. Skvortsov was also happily surprised when I told him of my success, and immediately invited me to be his guest again at the 2016 Zurich Chess Challenge. Because of an engagement elsewhere, I could only come for the final day, after following the earlier rounds online. I had read about Skvortsov's initiative to shorten the classical playing time. The idea is not new; Bronstein had already mooted it several decades ago. But it was important that this time it came from a major sponsor. Skvortsov's aim, really, is to have one-hour games with 10-second increments starting from move one. A practical problem with this is that such games do not count for the classical rating system. For this reason, Skvortsov had opted for 40 minutes each plus a 10-second increment per move for his Zurich tournament to make the games at least count for the rapid rating. It reminded me of the Oviedo tournaments from the early 1990s, where the players got 45 minutes for the entire game. The level of play was quite decent. The 40 minutes in Zurich had an undesired side-effect, however; I visited several websites, vainly searching for the classical games in Zurich until I discovered that they had been put in the 'rapid' category.

The final round I attended in the Savoy Hotel in Zurich was not the most exciting one, but it was important for the final result. Nakamura exploited an inaccuracy by Aronian to catch Anand. The blitz tournament that followed, half the result of which would count for the final standings, made no changes, so that both players ended up sharing first place. Nakamura's Sonneborn-Berger score being marginally better, he was declared the winner.

> 'Nakamura and Anand nearly always do well in games with a faster time-control.'

During the closing reception, I asked Skvortsov what he thought about the event. He was happy with the overall result and did not think it fair that some websites had classified the games as rapid chess. He was convinced that the faster time-control would be good for top-level chess. Not only would it be a blessing for the spectators, but it would also make for livelier games. The players would have to develop more initiative, and with less time it would not be so easy to remember complicated opening preparation. A game should not last more than 2½ hours, and once the players got used to the time-control, there would be no sharp decrease in the quality of the play.

There is a lot to be said for Skvortsov's idea, but personally I would prefer a time-control of 40 moves per hour, without increments, followed by 15 minutes for the rest of the game, with 10-second increments. In this case, too, games would rarely last much longer than 2½ hours, and this format has a few advantages: the players would have to note down their moves during the first 40 moves (which didn't happen in Zurich this time, but Skvortsov is considering it for next year, when the first half of the sixth edition will be played in Zurich and the second half at the Central Chess Club in Moscow). With one and a half minutes per move this should be no problem. It is also important to insert a short toilet break after the 40th move. And finally, it would make for spectacular time-trouble battles.

It was no surprise that Nakamura and Anand did so well in Zurich. They nearly always do well in games with a faster time-control. The others had more problems with the new format, especially Aronian. In the first round, he suffered a hopeless defeat at the hands of Anand.

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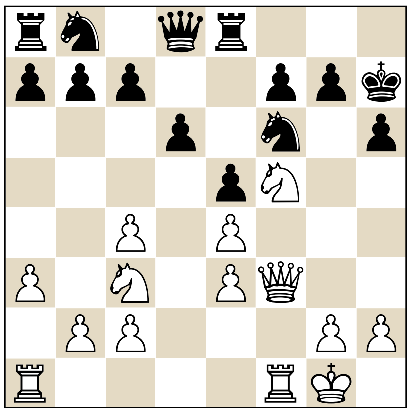
KP 10.1 – C48
Vishy Anand
Levon Aronian
Zurich 2016 (1)

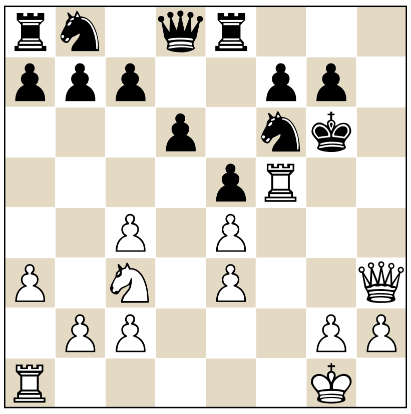
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♗d6 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 ♖e8 7.a3 h6 8.♗c4 ♗c5 9.♗e3 ♗xe3 10.fxe3 d6 11.♘h4 ♗e6 12.♘f5 ♗xc4 13.dxc4 ♔h7 14.♕f3 ♘b8



Aronian has not played with his usual care in the opening phase. He has an excellent structure for the endgame, of course, but White has such an overwhelming lead in development that he is able to launch a decisive attack.

15.♘xh6! An attractive sacrifice that wasn't hard to calculate.

15...♔xh6 16.♕h3+ ♔g6 17.♖f3 ♘h5 18.♖f5 ♘f6



19.♕h4! The real point of the knight sacrifice. Black resigned. Mate on the next move is inevitable.

Inviting Shirov had been an excellent idea. He played in his usual sharp style and was the only player who managed to get Anand into serious trouble.

NEW IN CHESS

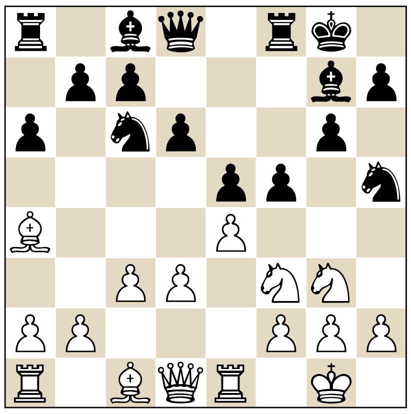
Vishy Anand convincingly bounced back after his shaky result in Gibraltar. He started with an attractive miniature against Levon Aronian.

RL 12.3 – C77
Vishy Anand
Alexei Shirov
Zurich 2016 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 No Berlin Wall! **4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 g6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♖e1 ♘h5 10.♘f1 f5**

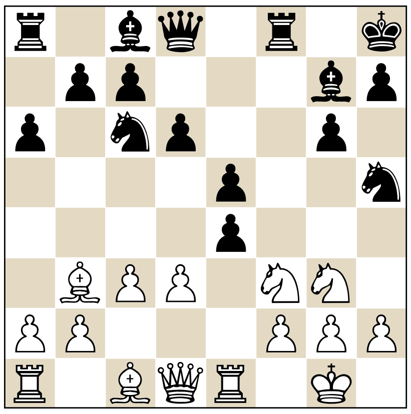
In an old game Boleslavsky-Smyslov, Leningrad 1947, Black played 10...♘f4, a move approved of by the computer. Shirov had already played the text three times in rapid games, so Anand must have been prepared for it.

11.♘g3



A novelty. Up to now, White had always swapped on f5, sometimes after a bishop check on b3.

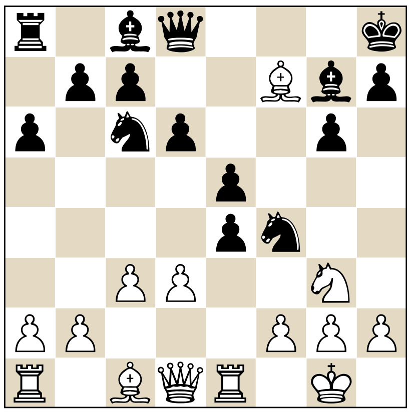
11...fxe4 12.♗b3+ ♔h8



13.♘g5! The crucial move. After 13.♗g5 ♗f6 White would have no advantage.

13...♘f4! An excellent reaction. Shirov sacrifices an exchange to create a strong centre and secure the initiative.

14.♘f7+ ♖xf7 15.♗xf7



15...♕f8!

Meanwhile in the Savoy

NEW IN CHESS

Oleg Skvortsov welcomes Sepp Blatter, while the former FIFA President's fiancée Linda Barras (indeed, 28 years his junior) welcomes the photographer.

The opening night of the Zurich Chess Classic in the ballroom of the Savoy Baur en Ville felt like an event that deserved a society column. Prominently seated in front row were the six world-class participants, but they were in excellent company. Several chess legends had been invited as guests of honour. **Judit Polgar** smiled her best smile for the cameras, and so did **Anatoly Karpov** and **Ljubomir Ljubojevic**. And the room briefly went silent as 84-year-old **Viktor Kortchnoi** arrived, in a wheelchair and looking frail, but clearly delighted to see many familiar faces from the Swiss and international chess community.

The evening started with music performed by three world-renowned Russian musicians, the cellist **Boris Andrianov**, the guitarist **Dimitry Illarionov** and **Ilya Gringolts**, 'one of the most inspirational violinists of today', according to *The Financial Times*. They played Bach and Piazzolla, but particularly impressive was Gringolt's rendering of Paganini's 24th Cappricio on his wonderful Guarneri violin.

In the days that followed, the first floor of the Savoy was crammed with chess enthusiasts, many of them queuing an hour in advance of the round to secure the best seats. There were celebrities that you might expect to see at a chess tournament and also some less expected guests. Seeing mathematics professor **Christian Hesse** did not really come as a surprise, he is also a prolific chess writer, after all, but the visit of his colleague **Manjul Bhargava**, professor of mathematics at Princeton University, caused quite a stir. Bhargava, who is world-famous for his contributions to number theory and the winner of the prestigious Fields Medal in 2014, had come to root for **Vishy Anand**, a good friend who he had first met at the International Congress of Mathematics in Madrid in 2006.

But perhaps the biggest surprise guest appeared on the last day. Strolling into the café of the Savoy on the ground floor, **Kirill Zangalis**, the PR manager of the Russian Chess Federation and an invited guest, had spotted a very familiar face. Zangalis didn't hesitate and went up to **Sepp Blatter**, the former president of FIFA, and invited him to come and watch the chess. When Blatter and his radiant fiancée walked into the playing room, I was certainly not the only one who remembered the statement of **Andrey Filatov**, the president of the Russian Chess Federation, who said last year that **Kirsan Ilyumzhinov** was an excellent candidate to head FIFA. At the time, a predictable joke was that in that case we might swap Ilyumzhinov for Blatter. That didn't happen and is not going to happen. As his fiancée **Linda Barras** confided to me, Blatter is not interested in chess at all. Blatter briefly watched the games and spoke with **Oleg Skvortsov** about the similarities between chess and football, but he showed no ambition to take over FIDE – which doesn't necessarily mean that Ilyumzhinov's successor was not in Zurich. According to persistent Russian rumours, **Vladimir Kramnik** may be FIDE president one day soon... Or even more likely, **Anatoly Karpov**.

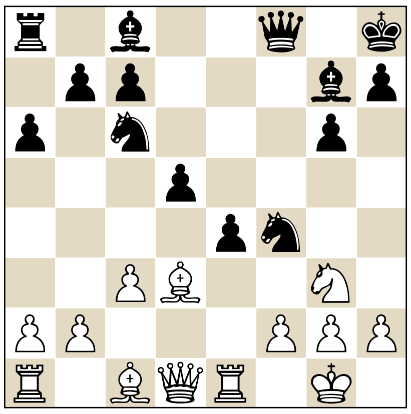
> 'Manjul Bhargava, the winner of the prestigious Fields Medal in 2014, had come to root for Vishy Anand.'

(Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam)

Another strong move. Now White will have to lose a tempo with his bishop, since 16.♗c4 fails to 16...d5.

16.♗b3 exd3 17.♗c4 d5 18.♗xd3 e4

This advance has a tactical drawback. Good was 18...♗g4 19.f3 ♗e6, with sufficient compensation.

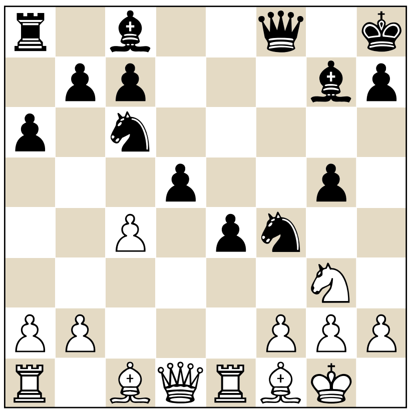


19.♗f1

Anand fails to exploit it. 19.♗c2! would have yielded him an advantage, the point being in the line 19...♗e6 20.♘xe4 dxe4 21.♖xe4 ♖d8 22.♕f1! ♘h3+ 23.gxh3 ♗f5 24.♗g5 ♗xe4 25.♗xe4, and with his strong bishop pair, White is better.

19...g5 20.c4

The principled move. White wants to break up the black centre. But there is a slight problem.



20...dxc4 If Shirov had been in top form, he would undoubtedly have found 20...♘e5!. White will have problems after 21.cxd5 ♗g4 22.♗e2 ♘xe2+ 23.♘xe2 ♘d3, the black knight being very strong.

21.♘xe4 ♘e5 22.♗xf4 gxf4 23.♘g5 ♗f5 24.♕d5

The start of a less than impressive queen manoeuvre. He should have returned the exchange. After 24.♖xe5 ♗xe5 25.♗xc4 White has some slight positional plus.

24...c6 25.♕a5 b5

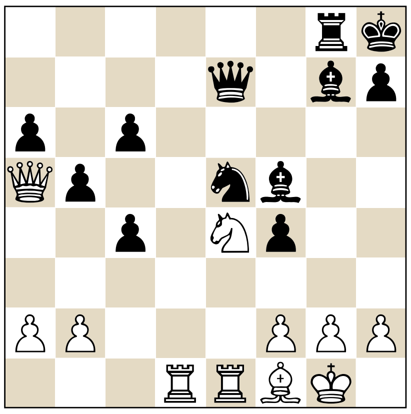
With simple moves Black has built up a comfortable position.

26.♖ad1

Now the white position loses all coordination. White should have made another queen move to prevent Black's next move: 26.♕d2 of 26.♕c7.

26...♕e7 Forcing the knight back.

27.♘e4 ♖g8

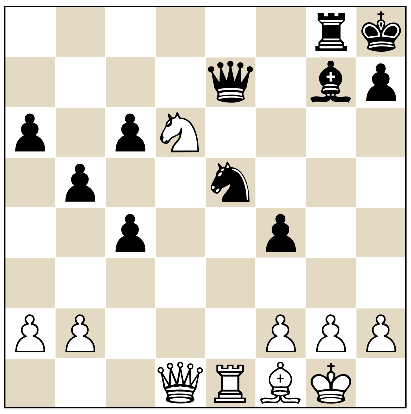


It is clear that Black has had all the time in the world to improve his setup. White's position is critical.

28.♘d6 ♗c2

Winning back the exchange.

29.♕d2 ♗xd1 30.♕xd1



30...♖f8

This is probably where Shirov let the win slip. Alternatives were:

A) 30...♖d8 31.♖xe5 ♗xe5 32.♘f7+ ♕xf7 33.♕xd8+ ♕g8, and now White cannot swap the queens, since the endgame with opposite-coloured bishops is lost. After 34.♕d7 he may still draw.

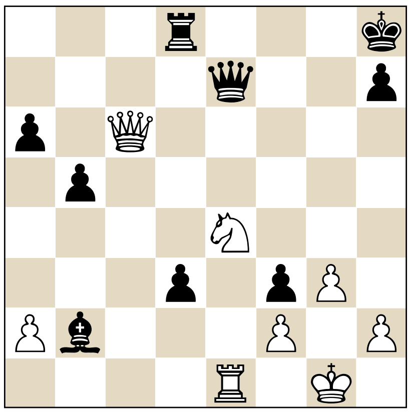
B) 30...♕d7!. The strongest move. Black unpins the knight in order to transfer it to d3 as quickly as possible. After 31.♘e4 ♘d3 Black should be winning.

31.♘e4

Now White has good drawing chances.

LESSONS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE
VONK
BEREND VONK

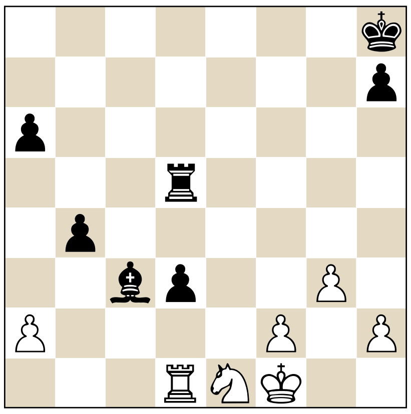
31...f3 32.g3 ♖d8 33.♕c1 ♘d3 34.♗xd3 cxd3 35.♕xc6 ♗xb2



36.♔f1!

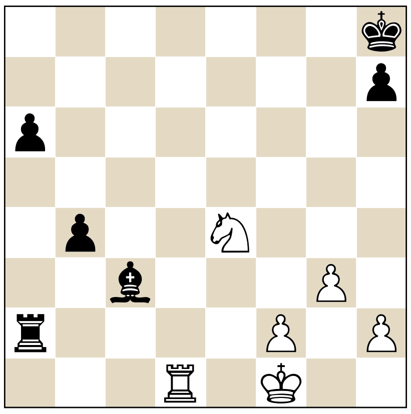
A strong defensive move.

36...♕d7 37.♕xd7 ♖xd7 38.♖d1 ♖d5 39.♘d2 b4 40.♘xf3 ♗c3 41.♘e1



41...d2 This will turn out to have been a waste of tempo. The immediate 41...♖a5 would have offered better chances, although White would probably just hold the endgame. One possible variation is 42.♘xd3 ♖xa2 43.♘c5 a5 44.♖d8+ ♔g7 45.♖a8 ♔f6 46.f4! ♖xh2 47.g4, and the black king will be kept away.

42.♘f3 ♖a5 43.♘xd2 ♖xa2 44.♘e4



NEW IN CHESS

Alexei Shirov played in his usual sharp style and was the only player who managed to get Anand in serious trouble.

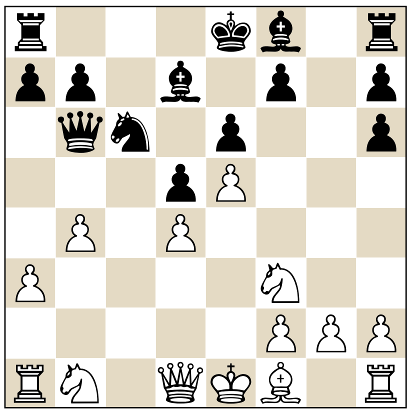
White's problems have been solved. The black passed pawns have not advanced far enough.

44...a5 45.♘xc3 bxc3 46.♖c1 ♖a3 47.♔e2 a4 48.♖c2 ♖b3 49.♔d3 a3 50.♔c4 a2 51.♖xa2 ♖b2 52.♖a8+ Draw.

Nakamura was in danger twice, against Giri and Kramnik. His win against Shirov was typical of his style. With quiet positional play he maintains the tension, striking when his opponent loses the thread.

FR 3.6 – C02
Alexei Shirov
Hikaru Nakamura
Zurich 2016 (2)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♕b6 6.a3 ♘h6 7.b4 cxd4 8.♗xh6 gxh6 9.cxd4 ♗d7

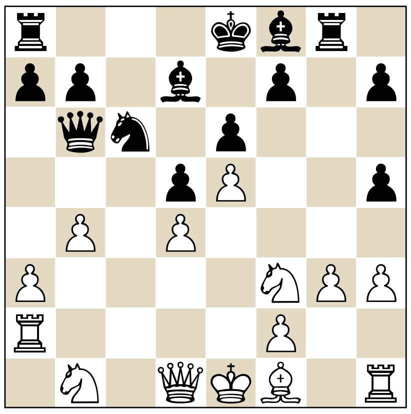


10.♖a2 This strange rook move is vintage Sveshnikov, but Grischuk, Rapport and Shirov himself have also tried it before. It doesn't seem to me that White will be able to count on any opening advantage. His problem, however, is that 10.♘c3 is problematic in view of 10...♘xb4!.

10...♖g8 The sharpest reaction. Black doesn't mind his king staying in the middle. He wants to grab the initiative.

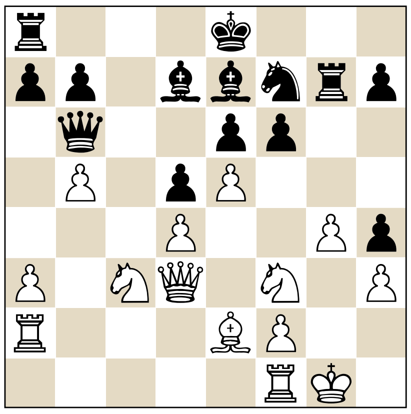
11.h3 A necessary preventive measure. The black rook was threatening to penetrate on g4.

11...h5 12.g3 Better seems 12.♕d3.



12...h4! Weakening the white kingside structure.

13.g4 ♗e7 14.♗e2 f6 15.b5 ♘d8 16.♕d3 ♖g7 17.♘c3 ♘f7 18.0-0



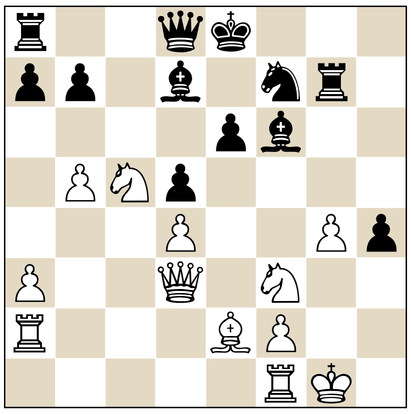
A serious inaccuracy. White should have swapped on f6.

18...h5

Nakamura fails to exploit it. 18...fxe5 19.♘xe5 ♘xe5 20.dxe5 ♖c8 would have yielded him a large advantage. White has no control over the position at all.

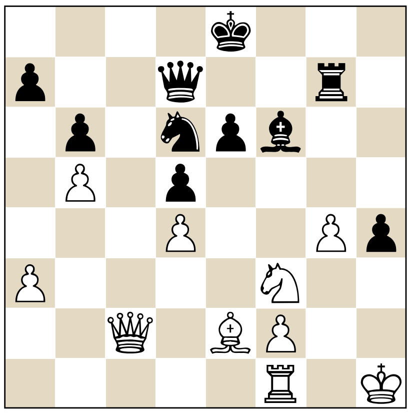
19.♘a4 With this manoeuvre White manages to create counterplay.

19...♕d8 20.exf6 ♗xf6 21.♘c5 hxg4 22.hxg4



22...b6 Nakamura keeps the position simple. With 22...♕c7 he could have made a sharp attempt to go for an advantage, e.g. 23.♔h1 ♕f4 24.♖g1 ♗e7 25.♘xb7 ♖c8, with a strong initiative.

23.♘xd7 ♕xd7 24.♔h1 ♖c8 25.♖c2 ♖xc2 26.♕xc2 ♘d6



27.♘e5 Good thinking. White wants to swap his knight to reinforce his pawn structure.

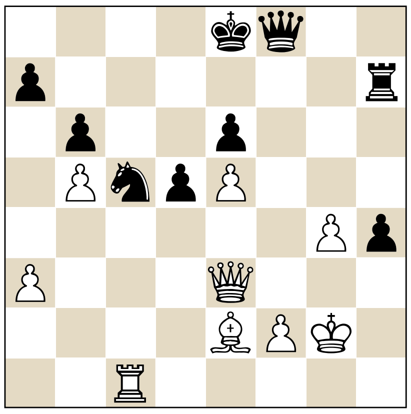
27...♗xe5 28.dxe5 ♘e4 29.♔g2 ♘c5

The knight has found a strong foothold, but is too far from the kingside to trouble White.

NEW IN CHESS

After he repeated last year's victory in Gibraltar, Hikaru Nakamura also notched up the Zurich Chess Challenge again.

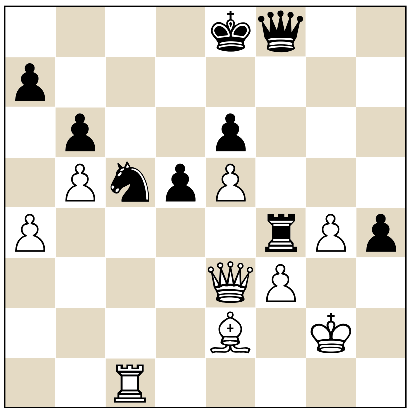
30.♖h1 ♕e7 31.♕c1 ♖h7 32.♕e3 ♕g7 33.♖c1 ♕f8



34.a4 Slightly stronger was 34.♗d3 ♖g7 35.f3, after which Black must play accurately to maintain the balance. The text is enough for equality. White is going to open the a-file.

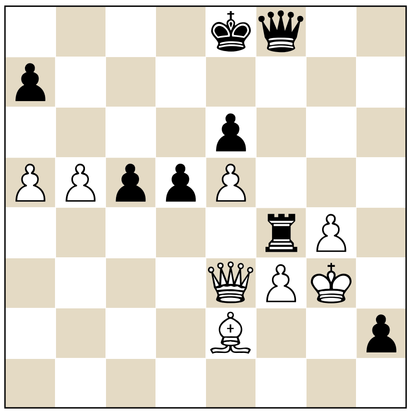
34...♖f7 35.f3 There was no reason not to play 35.a5. Maybe Shirov was afraid of 35...h3+, but then he has a good reply in 36.♔g1.

35...♖f4



36.♖xc5?? Utter panic. 36.♖h1 would have maintained the equilibrium.

36...bxc5 37.a5 h3+ 38.♔g3 h2



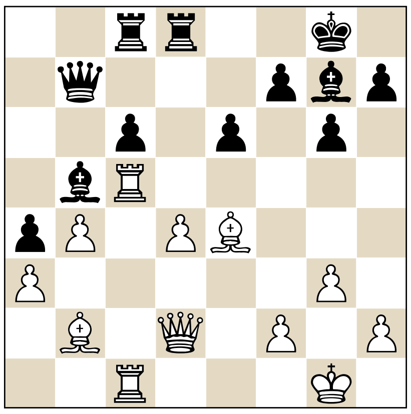
White resigned. He loses his queen after 39.♔xh2 ♕h6+ 40.♔g3 ♖xg4+.

SAVOY
BAUR EN VILLE ZURICH
evian

Exchanging jokes, Vladimir Kramnik and Anish Giri wait for the start of their game. The Russian had the last laugh.

NEW IN CHESS

Kramnik played very solidly in Zurich; like the winners, he didn't lose a single game. But he only won against Giri in a strategic throttling game with a less-than-convincing finale.



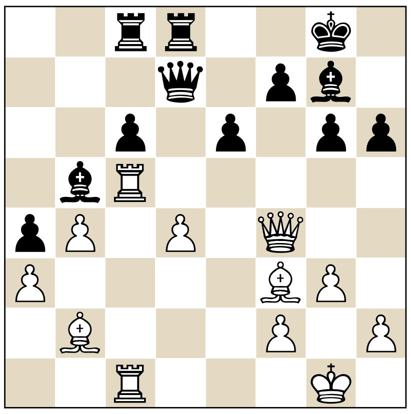
Kramnik-Giri
Zurich 2016 (4)
position after 24...♕b7

White is exerting pressure, but finds it difficult to increase it. So he starts with some teasing blows.

25.♕g5 The queen is not particularly threatening here, but it provokes Black into making a few pawn moves on the kingside.

25...h6 There's nothing wrong with this pawn move per se.

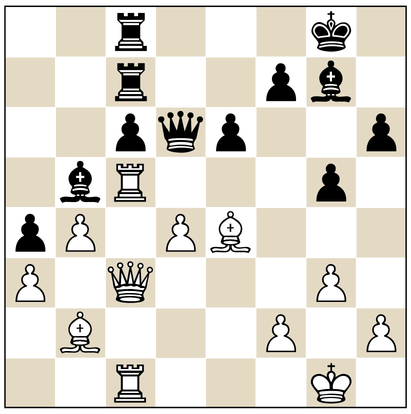
26.♕f4 ♕d7 27.♗f3



27...g5?

But this is seriously weakening, and a very uncharacteristic mistake by Giri. He is usually very solid and strategically alert.

28.♕e3 ♖c7 29.♕c3 ♖dc8 30.♗e4 ♕d6



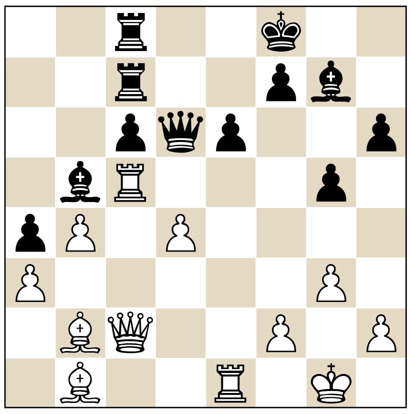
31.♗b1!

The consequences of Black's mistake are becoming clear. White is going to form a battery on the b1-h7 diagonal.

31...♔f8 32.♕c2 ♔e7

The black king has fled, but it won't be safe in the centre either.

33.♖e1 ♔f8



34.d5!

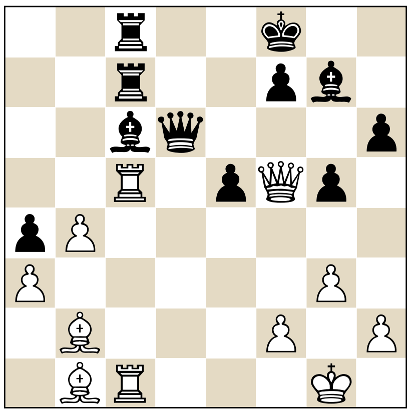
The decisive breakthrough.

34...e5 35.♖c1 ♗f6 36.♕f5 ♗g7 37.dxc6 ♗xc6

Zurich 2016 – rapid				cat. XXI
				TPR
1 Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2787	7	2920
2 Vishy Anand	IND	2784	7	2921
3 Vladimir Kramnik	RUS	2801	6	2841
4 Levon Aronian	ARM	2792	4	2698
5 Alexei Shirov	LAT	2684	3	2643
6 Anish Giri	NED	2798	3	2620
1 point for a draw, 2 points for a win				

Zurich 2016 – blitz				cat. XXI
				TPR
1 Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2787	3½	2920
2 Vladimir Kramnik	RUS	2801	3½	2918
3 Vishy Anand	IND	2784	3½	2921
4 Anish Giri	NED	2798	2½	2769
5 Levon Aronian	ARM	2792	1½	2621
6 Alexei Shirov	LAT	2684	½	2426

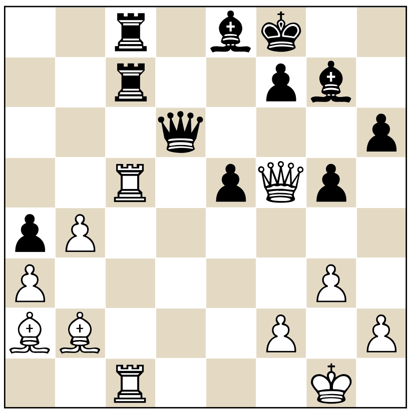
Zurich 2016 – combined		
1 Hikaru Nakamura	2787	10½
2 Vishy Anand	2784	10½
3 Vladimir Kramnik	2801	9½
4 Anish Giri	2798	5½
5 Levon Aronian	2792	5½
6 Alexei Shirov	2684	3½



38.♕c2 Kramnik hesitates. With 38.♕d3 he could have won a piece by force. After the queen exchange the pin on the c-file will have fatal consequences for Black.

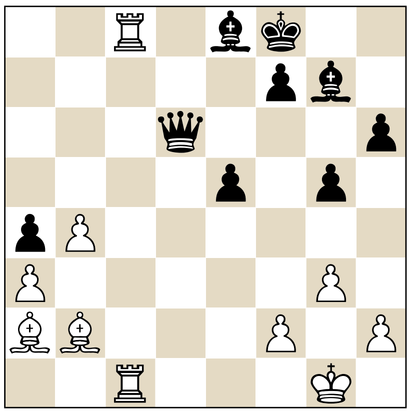
38...♕e6 39.♕f5 ♕d6 40.♗a2
40.♕d3 was still have winning.

40...♗e8



41.♕xc8 This is what Kramnik had pinned his hopes on. Normally in this kind of position, two rooks are far stronger than the queen, but the position contains a saving tactical turn for Black.

41...♖xc8 42.♖xc8



42...♕d2 After this move Black will quickly go under. With 42...e4! he could have sown confusion, the point being that after 43.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 44.♖xe8 ♕d2 Black will win back the piece, when it is unclear how White will win.

43.♖1c7 ♕xb2 44.♖xf7+ ♔g8 45.♖xe8+ ♔h7 46.♗d5 Black resigned.

For four players, the Zurich tournament constituted their last appearance before the Candidates' tournament. What are their chances? It seems to me that Nakamura will start in Moscow as one of the favourites. His game is very constant. There's nothing particularly spectacular about it, but it has few weaknesses. Nakamura usually goes for well-organized positions, in which he rarely makes mistakes. Another favourite did not play in Zurich this year: Caruana. In Wijk aan Zee he played strong and interesting games. With Nakamura he shares an excellent fighting spirit. For Anand, Zurich must have been a relief after his catastrophic performance in Gibraltar, but I still don't think he will be amongst the favourites in Moscow. In the previous two Candidates' tournaments he was well able to deal with the tension, but your energy levels go down when you're nearing 50. The most unpredictable Candidate is Aronian. He rediscovered his form late last year, but in Zurich he was sometimes quite careless. You never know if he will be able to find and keep his form. Keeping it has always been his biggest problem. You'd think it would be bound to happen some day, and a match against Carlsen would be interesting in every respect. Giri seemed to be one of the great favourites after the London tournament, when he was two full points ahead in the overall standings of the Grand Chess Tour. But then the machine stalled. His loss of form already showed itself in Qatar, where he failed to win his last six games. In Wijk aan Zee he was clearly off form, and Zurich was little better. However, if he succeeds in finding his form of the Grand Chess Tour again, he may well be in with a chance. ■

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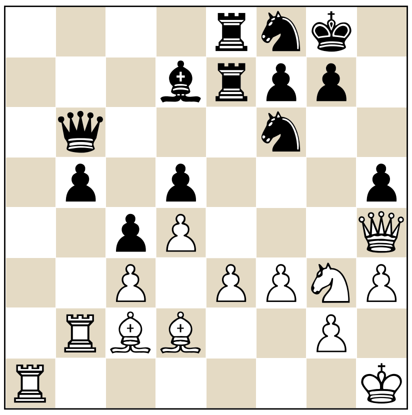
Away with your rooks!

ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

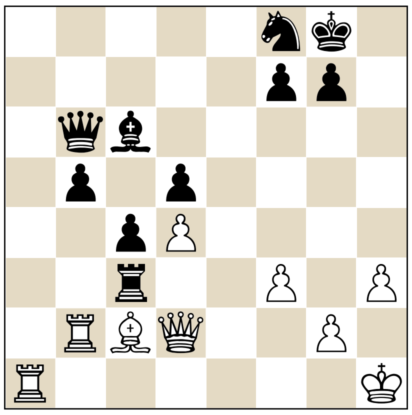
To hold on to the initiative gained from an exchange sac, a second exchange sac may be called for.

We start off with a brilliancy from the Second International Tournament in Moscow.



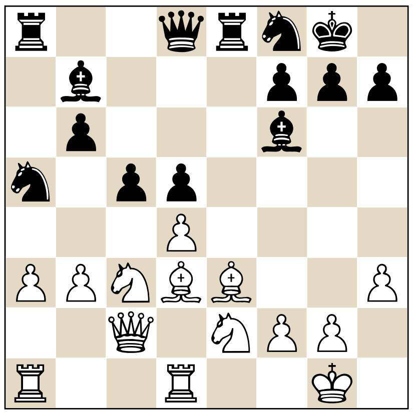
Lilienthal-Ragozin
Moscow 1935
position after 27.♘g3

27...♖xe3 The first exchange sac. In addition to a pawn Black gets some nice dark squares. **28.♗xe3 ♖xe3 29.♘xh5 ♘xh5 30.♕xh5 ♗c6 31.♕g5** After ...♖xc3 Lilienthal hopes to trap the rook. **31...♖xc3! 32.♕d2**



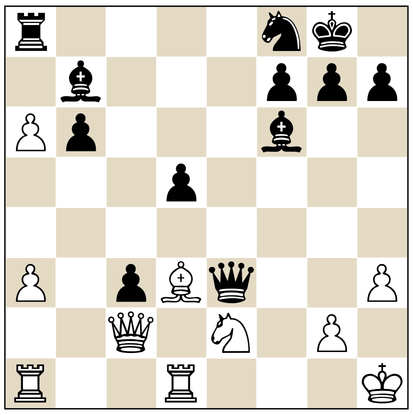
32...♖xc2 33.♖xc2 ♘e6 33...b4 34.♖b1 b3 is more accurate. **34.♖d1** At the time, annotators ignored this move, but it was probably better to give up the d4-pawn than to allow Black's b-pawn to advance. After 34.♖b2 ♕xd4 35.♕xd4 ♘xd4 White has to decide how to stop the black pawns. A tough choice, but without the help of the king Black will find it hard to advance his passed pawns. **34...b4 35.♖b2 b3** Now White still got stuck with two passive rooks, while Black's passed pawns ensure more and more space. **36.♕c3 ♘c7 37.♖e2 ♕a7 38.♕b4 ♘b5 39.♖e7 ♕a3! 40.♕e1 c3 41.♖e8+** 41.♖a1!, activating the rook, was White's last chance. **41...♗xe8 42.♕xe8+ ♔h7 43.♕xf7 ♕a8 44.♖e1 ♘d6 45.♕c7 c2 46.♕xd6 b2 47.♕f4 ♕c6 0-1**

A tense and spectacular game, which yielded Ragozin a brilliancy prize!



Volokitin-Bortnik
Sochi 2014
position after 19.♖fd1

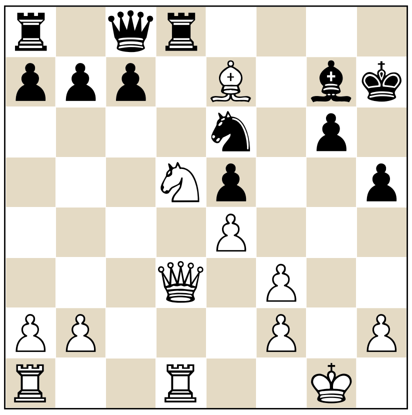
Here is a modern example in which the compensation quickly becomes more evident. **19...♖xe3 20.fxe3 ♕e8 21.b4** The e3-pawn cannot be saved: 21.♔f2 ♗g5 22.♘f4? cxd4; but the text-move allows the a5-knight to escape. 21.♖ab1 ♕xe3+ 22.♔h1 cxd4 23.♘b5. **21...♕xe3+ 22.♔h1 cxd4 23.bxa5** 23.♘b5 ♘c4. **23...dxc3 24.a6** A logical try to exchange the light-squared bishops, because after 24.axb6 d4 the threat of ♕xh3 can barely be parried.



24...♖xa6! Sometimes you should forget about material gains and losses and focus on activity and initiative, which, I assure you, is a lot harder behind the board than when reading a chess column in a magazine. **25.♗xa6 ♗xa6** This time two bishops are supporting the passed pawns. While they are doing their long-distance tricks, the white rooks are miserably useless. **26.♘c1 d4 27.♘d3 ♗b7!** A powerful return to the long diagonal. It may not be obvious yet, but already White is lost. His king will soon be subject to a fierce attack. **28.♘f2** 28.♔h2 ♗h4. **28...♗h4 29.♖f1 ♘e6 30.♘d1** 30.♖ae1 ♗xg2+. **30...♕xh3+ 31.♔g1 ♕g4** Threatening ...d4-d3. Black's massive activity determines his decisive advantage. In the meantime, he has also gathered sufficient pawns. **32.♖a2 ♗d5 33.♕a4 ♗xa2 34.♘xc3 ♗b3 35.♕xb3 dxc3 36.♕xc3**

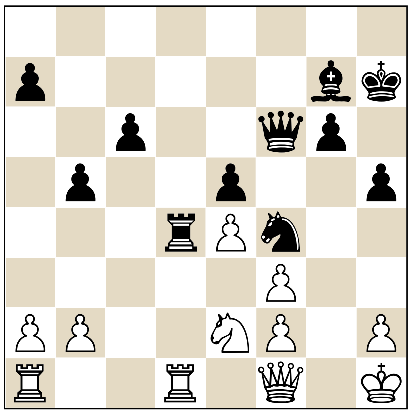
♕d4+ 37.♕xd4 ♘xd4 38.♖b1 ♗d8 39.♔f2 ♘e6 40.♔e3 ♗e7 41.a4 h5 42.♔d2 ♗c5 43.♔c3 h4 44.♔c4 g5 0-1 A smashing victory for the young Ukrainian!

In the following complex game, in which Black tried to maintain domination on the dark squares, White's vulnerable king was also an important factor.



Nigalidze-Kuzubov
Yerevan 2014
position after 27.♗e7

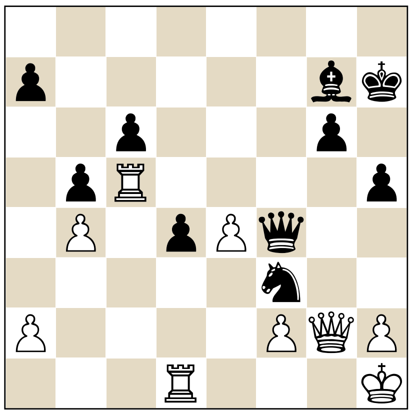
27...c6 Not a necessary exchange sac, as after 27...♘f4 28.♕f1 ♖d7 29.♘xf4 ♖xe7 30.♘d5 ♖f7 Black is fine. **28.♗xd8 ♕xd8 29.♘c3 ♕f6 30.♔h1 ♖d8** Black wants to fight for the d-file, which will soon lead to the second exchange sac. Meanwhile, a complete focus on the kingside, where the rook goes to f8, was a feasible alternative. **31.♕f1 ♖d4 32.♕g2 ♘f4 33.♕f1 b5** 33...♘e6 would lead to move repetition, but Kuzubov wants more. **34.♘e2**



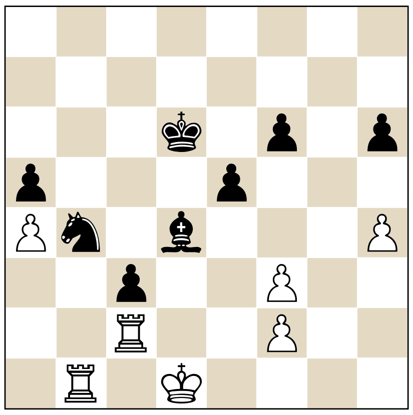
34...♘e6 Kuzubov prefers to keep his knight, trying to keep the lines closed for the enemy rooks. The rook swap would have left White with an unchallenged rook, for example 34...♘xe2 35.♕xe2 ♗h6 36.♖xd4 exd4 37.e5 ♕h4 38.♖g1 ♗f4 39.♖g2. **35.♘xd4 exd4 36.b4!!** Preventing ...c6-c5, while the a1-rook will inevitably become active along the a-file. The loss of the f3-pawn is of minor importance. **36...♘g5 37.♖ac1?** 37.a4! ♕f4 38.axb5 ♘xf3 39.♕h3 cxb5 40.♖a3!, and Black's compensation falls short. **37...♕f4 38.♕g2 ♘xf3**

> 'To keep the initiative going it is often necessary to refrain from winning back material.'

39.♖c5? Black suddenly seems to have almost sufficient grip to compensate for the two exchanges, and White immediately goes wrong. More challenging was 39.♖g1 ♕xe4. Of course, Black does not take the inferior rook. The knight is a much more active and thus more valuable piece here. Still, after 40.♖ge1 ♕f5 41.♖e7 ♔h6 42.♖e6! (after 42.♖xa7 d3) White remains in the lead.



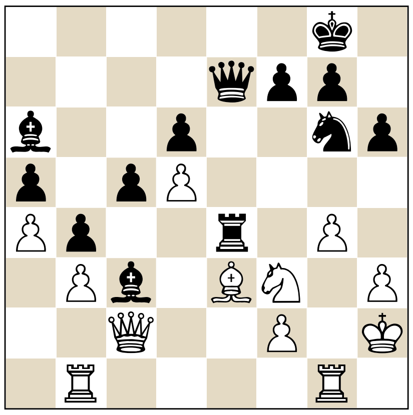
39...♗f8? Kuzubov returns the favour. 39...d3! (40.♖xd3? ♘e1) would have left the passive white pieces helpless against the various threats. In the game, Nigalidze managed to get rid of the f3-knight by returning an exchange and in the end it was Black who made the last major mistake.



Gelfand-Leko
Miskolc 2010 (rapid)
position after 34...♔d6

As you have seen, to keep the initiative going it is often necessary to refrain from winning back material. Consequently, the side with two exchanges up will often consider giving back some material.
Here Gelfand broke Leko's beautiful blockade in typical fashion: **35.♖b3 ♘xc2** (otherwise 36.♖xc3) **36.♔xc2** And now the remaining rook could not be stopped from deciding the issue. **36...h5 37.♖b5 ♗xf2 38.♖xa5 ♗xh4 39.♖b5 ♗f2 40.♖b7 ♔c6 41.♖f7 ♔b6 42.♖xf6+ ♔a5 43.♖f5 ♔xa4 44.♖xe5 h4 45.♔xc3 1-0**

It must be clear by now that the defending side (oh, well, the accepting side) should avoid passive rooks at all cost. Here is one last ultimate warning.



Karjakin-Caruana
Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012
position after 30.♖g1

30...♖xe3 31.fxe3 ♕xe3 32.♖bf1 ♗e2! 33.♕f5 ♗d3 34.♕d7 ♗e5+ 35.♔h1 ♗e4 36.♕e8+ ♘f8 0-1 ■

Guiding Stars

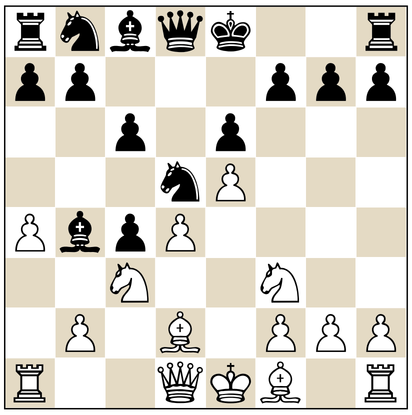
The champions of yesteryear remain a source of inspiration. If you don't know too much about greats such as Chigorin, Alekhine and Karpov, **MATTHEW SADLER** tells you why you should.

It's been an extremely busy period for me. Looking back at the number of books I've read over the past couple of months, I wonder how I ever managed to fit in any work! I want to start with two ChessBase DVDs from the Master Class series to which I treated myself for Christmas: *volume 3: Alexander Alekhine* and *volume 6: Anatoly Karpov*.

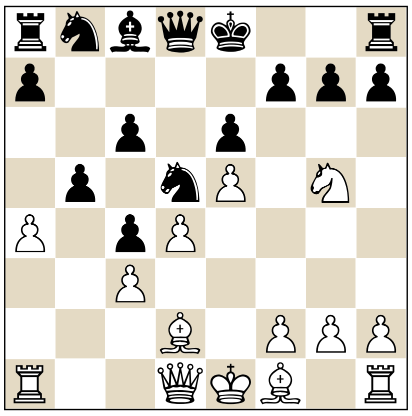
The concept behind this series is excellent. Take a classic player and let a different GM analyse each part of his game: opening, middlegame, tactics and endgames. I suppose the risk is that with four GM's involved in each DVD, the quality of the content can be uneven and this is indeed the case in the two DVD's I looked at. Starting with *Alexander Alekhine,* I was really impressed by Dorian Rogozenco's examination of Alekhine's opening repertory. Obviously the level of opening theory and preparation in the 1930s was nothing in comparison to the modern game, so you need to approach the subject with some historical perspective. I particularly liked his comments to the game Alekhine-Bogoljubow from the 1st game of the 1929 World Championship Match:

SL 3.4 – D31
Alexander Alekhine
Efim Bogoljubow
World Championship 1929 (1)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 e6 6.e4 ♗b4 7.e5
In the first volume of *My Great Predecessors* Kasparov has a little dig at Bogoljubow with the comment that 'the initial stage was very feebly played by his opponent'. This is objectively true, of course, but, as Rogozenco indicates, there are many recent examples where strong modern players solved the complicated problems that Alekhine set in equally poor fashion as Bogoljubow.
7...♘d5
7...♘e4 was played by Euwe against Alekhine in 1935. After 8.♕c2 ♕d5 9.♗e2 c5 10.0-0 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 cxd4 12.cxd4 c3 13.♗d2 ♕a5 14.♗xc3 ♗xc3 15.♖a3 ♘c6 16.♖xc3 ♗d7 17.♖b1 White had a clear advantage and won a clear pawn after 17...0-0 18.♖c5 ♕d8 19.♖xb7, which Alekhine converted 40 moves later after typically dogged resistance from Euwe. Again a question of feeble 1930s opening play? Well Rogozenco points us to a game from 2009 in which a very strong 2650 GM (presumably caught out and having to improvise) played exactly the same first 16 moves as Black... and then lost 4 moves later! It does make you appreciate the complexity of the practical problems that Alekhine was setting his opponents. You also wonder if strong modern players would play the opening much better than the greats without the buffer of the knowledge of the past 80 years.
8.♗d2

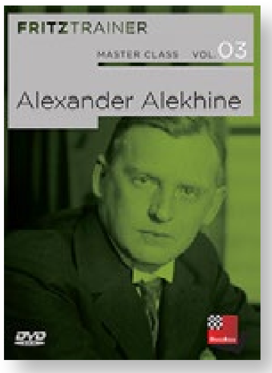


This is a critical decision for Black – already on the 8th move! Protect c4 by playing ...b5 after taking on c3, or play ...b5 first and allow White to play ♘e4? I find it hard to criticise anyone for not choosing correctly over the board. The punishment for choosing incorrectly is uncommonly severe – but that was the essence of Alekhine's enormous advantage over his contemporaries.
8...♗xc3 9.bxc3 b5 10.♘g5

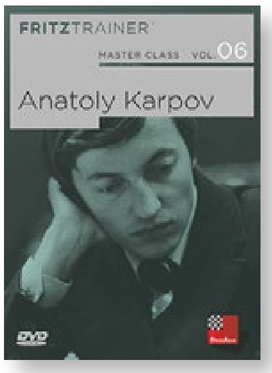


Not a nice situation to be in, especially when you consider the tension of the first game of a World Championship Match!
10...f6 11.exf6 ♘xf6 12.♗e2 a6

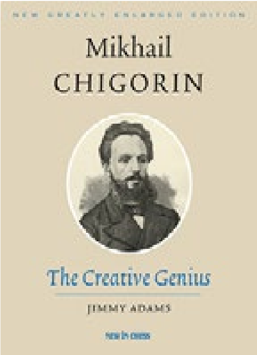
Master Class vol. 3: Alexander Alekhine
by Marin, Rogozenco, Müller, Reeh
ChessBase, 2014
★★★☆☆



Master Class vol. 6: Anatoly Karpov
by Marin, Müller, Reeh, Huschenbeth
ChessBase, 2014
★★★☆☆



Mikhail Chigorin, the Creative Genius
by Jimmy Adams
New In Chess, 2016
★★★★☆



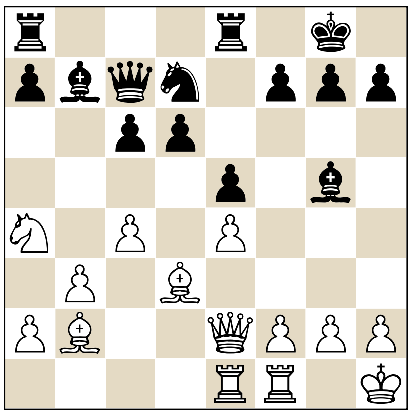
13.♗f3 h6 14.♗h5+ ♘xh5 15.♕xh5+ ♔d7 16.♘f7 ♕e8 17.♕g6 ♖g8 18.♗f4 ♗b7 19.♗g3 ♔e7 20.♗d6+ ♔d7 21.0-0 c5 22.dxc5 ♗d5 23.axb5 axb5 24.♖xa8 ♗xa8 25.♖a1 ♘c6 26.♘e5+ 1-0

I also enjoyed Oliver Reeh's section on Alekhine's tactical prowess greatly. Reeh finds a nice balance between challenging the watcher and providing him with clues to help him on his way. The only complaint I have about this section (in all the DVDs) is technical: you have to press on OK an awful lot more times than necessary to proceed through a single tactical exercise. I found this very irritating after a while! The other two sections (Marin on middlegames and Müller on endgames) are also fine though I was a bit disappointed with Marin's section, which was of a solid standard rather than the super-high level you expect from him.

> 'You also wonder if strong modern players would play the opening much better than the greats without the buffer of the knowledge of the past 80 years.'

■ ■ ■

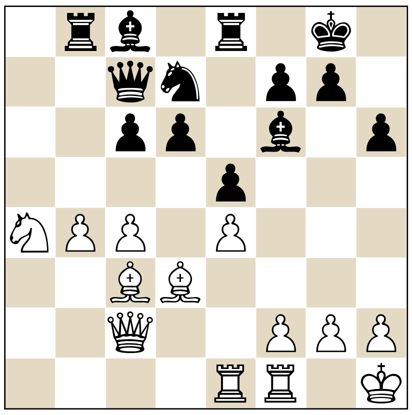
That cannot be said for *Anatoly Karpov*, in which Marin's section is the jewel of the whole DVD. He examines games in which Karpov executed a plan by moving the same piece multiple times in succession, and each game features a different piece!



Karpov-Stein
Leningrad 1971
position after 16...♗g5

Marin starts here. I could ask you to guess Karpov's moves in the ensuing phase, but I think only Anatoly could do that. The effect is mystical: he moves his queen 4 times in the next 6 moves, and then he stands better and nobody knows why!

17.♕c2 h6 18.b4 a6 19.♕b3 ♖ab8 20.a3 ♗c8 21.♕c3 ♗f6 22.♕c2 a5 23.♗c3 axb4 24.axb4



With a pleasant little advantage which Karpov later pushed through to a win on the 47th move. I would not have been able to make anything of that episode of play without Marin's explanations!

I would love to give this DVD 5 stars based on this alone, but unfortunately the rest of the content is not half as much fun. The Müller section on the endgame is very unfortunate. Everyone knows how much effort and work Müller has put into analysing these famous endgames of Karpov and how many amazing possibilities he has discovered in them, but it feels as if he has forgotten that we haven't! He whizzes through these endgames at such a pace that I was unable to follow them. As for Huschenbeth's examination of Karpov's opening repertory, I think I'll just take a deep breath, call it a wasted opportunity and leave it at that. So a real shame – only Marin's superb contribution keeps this DVD at 3 stars.

■ ■ ■

Mikhail Chigorin – The Creative Genius (New In Chess) would normally be a book I would want to spend ages on, but since we dedicated 12 pages of the previous magazine to it, I will try and be brief! It's a great read: I read it cover to cover in a weekend and enjoyed it very much. The annotations to the games are so-so (typical 1960-style with – incorrect – categorical judgements and other superficialities) but the games themselves are well-chosen. Two things made an enormous impression

on me. First of all, how could anyone with the upbringing that Chigorin had become so strong at chess? It's an amazing story.

Secondly, take a look at these statements and let them sink in:

'The ability to skilfully combine, the capacity to find in each given position the most expedient move, is the quickest way to execute a well-conceived plan, and is in fact the only principle in the game of chess' – Mikhail Chigorin.

'I do not consider myself belonging to this or that "school", I am guided not by abstract theoretical considerations on the comparative strength of pieces etc. but only on the data as they appear to me in this or that position of the game, which serves as an object of detailed and possibly accurate analysis. Each of my moves presented themselves as a feasible inference from a series of variations in which theoretical "principles of play" could only have a very limited significance' – Mikhail Chigorin.

'In virtually all openings it is possible to find moves which are not inferior to the theoretical ones, if an experienced and strong player is able to make them the point of a whole combination' – Mikhail Chigorin.

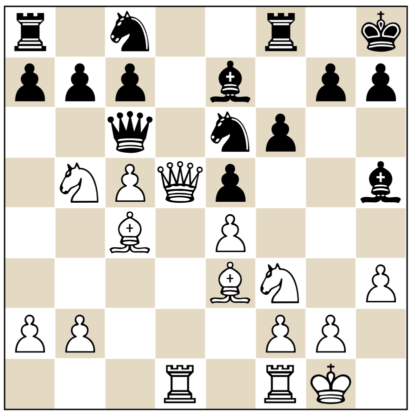
'Beautiful combinations are made possible only by a mistake of the opponent' – Wilhelm Steinitz.

'It will be noticed that in each of these games (a theme match played by telegraph between Chigorin and Steinitz in the Evans Gambit and the Two Knights Defence – ed.) I am a pawn ahead and, theoretically, I maintain I ought to have a won game in each.' – Wilhelm Steinitz.

Don't we have here the perfect summary of the approach to chess anno 2016? On one side, an enormous breadth in opening choice and very concrete play (supported by computer analysis) at every opportunity. We could call this the 'Chigorin tendency'. On the other side, the belief that pretty much any position can be defended (based on our experiences with computers), which we could call the 'Steinitz tendency'. Both these players fought out their side of the debate through openings which are now considered archaic (the Evans Gambit for example) but their conception of chess was visionary in my view, much better than any other player in the next 40 years. In all of this, Steinitz had by far the most difficult task as he was trying to do something in which no modern player has succeeded (well not legally anyway) – to defend like a computer.

'Steinitz could have made many points in much easier fashion if he hadn't wanted to prove his conception of chess to himself and the world.'

Take a look at this example, which is typical of Steinitz's computer-like defence:



The third game from the Chigorin-Steinitz World Championship Match in Havana 1889. And here Steinitz found 19...♗e8 to keep his position together by tactical means (20.♕xe6 ♕xe6 21.♗xe6 ♗xb5 wins back the piece), which is the type of thing that's always happening to me in my practice rapid games against Stockfish!

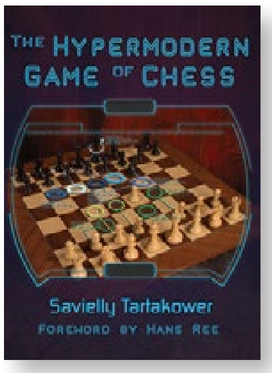
What made things even more difficult for Steinitz was that he was a very strong practical player. He could have made many points in much easier fashion if he hadn't wanted to prove his conception of chess to himself and the world. The book inspired me anyway! Definitely recommended!

* * *

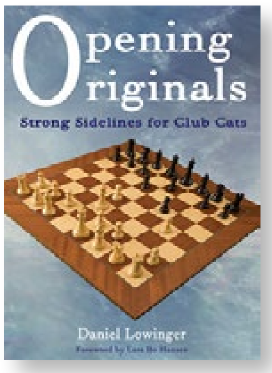
On to the 1920s, as Russell Enterprises bring out the Second Edition of Savielly Tartakower's typically quirky examination of modern (at the time) opening theory entitled *The Hypermodern Game of Chess*. At work, I've recently been working with a company that converts old code from obsolete technologies into code suitable for new technologies. One of their technicians called himself a 'software archaeologist' and I had the same feeling while browsing through this book. It's not a book you can really read from cover to cover but if – like me – you enjoy analysing classic games, then it's a lovely reference to have next to you in order to get an idea of the state of chess theory at the time the game was played! It's so funny to see the beginnings of the Meran system and some Sicilian setups! Enjoyable as a nice curiosity!

* * *

Talking of quirky, then that description also fits another Russell Enterprises offering this month: *Opening Originals – Strong Sidelines for Club Cats* by Daniel Lowinger. It's a collection of 15 fairly unrelated opening ideas that you may or may not be able to fit into your own opening repertory! There are some pretty shocking ideas that have never ever made it on to my radar before, such as the Senegalese Sacrifice: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.♗d3 c5 6.c3 b5?!?!

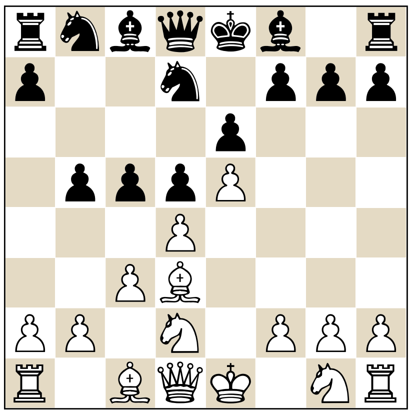


The Hypermodern Game of Chess
by Savielly Tartakower
Russell Enterprises, 2015
★★★☆☆



Opening Originals
by Daniel Lowinger
Russell Enterprises, 2015
★★★☆☆

GM Repertoire 1.e4 vs The Sicilian II
by Parimarjan Negi
Quality Chess, 2015
★★★★★



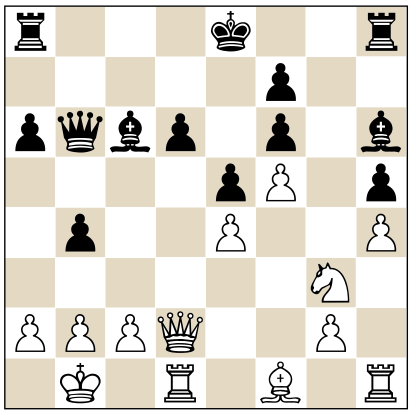
Yikes! The book is full of interesting analysis so if Lowinger covers an idea that might work in your repertory, I'd say go ahead, get the book and give it a whirl!

■ ■ ■

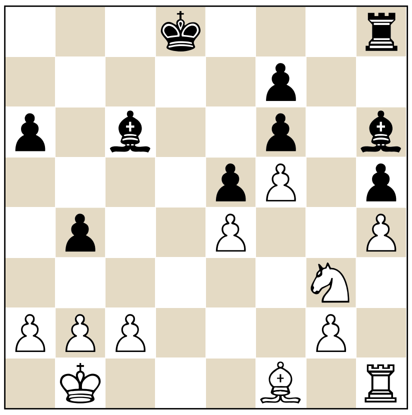
And finally time for the serious stuff: another instalment of Parimarjan Negi's continuing quest to make all opening books for Black against 1.e4 obsolete – *1.e4 vs The Sicilian II* (Quality Chess).

Negi is actually a godsend for a book reviewer because I can more or less repeat what I said in my previous columns! Once again this is a work of the very highest quality. I'm not a lifelong Open Sicilian player so I sometimes feel a little insecure judging the quality of the analysis. I tend to compare the lines Negi suggests with other books I've read recently to see whether he addresses their recommendations. He rarely fails me!

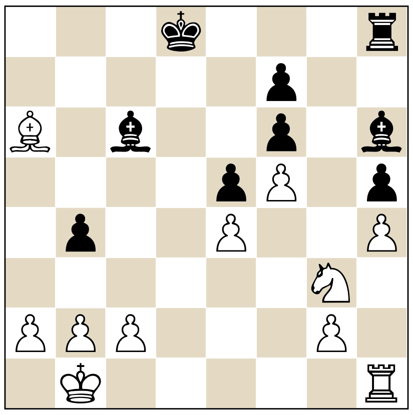
In this case, I was intrigued to compare his recommendations in the Richter-Rauzer (1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5) with Mihail Marin's DVD which had impressed me enormously. Marin had recommended this line as Black: **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♗d7 9.f4 b5 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♔b1 ♕b6 12.♘xc6 ♗xc6 13.f5 b4 14.♘e2 e5 15.♘g3 h5 16.h4 ♗h6**



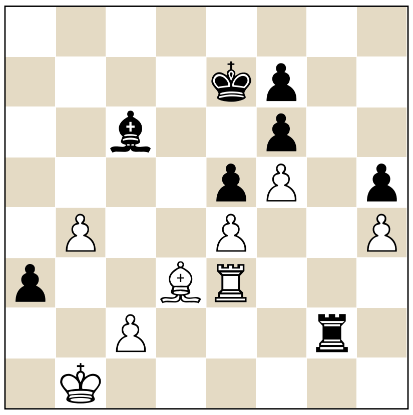
This involves a double pawn sacrifice. **17.♕xd6 ♖d8 18.♕xd8+ ♕xd8 19.♖xd8+ ♔xd8**



Marin gave some very convincing lines and I remember nodding to myself wisely in grandmasterly agreement as I saw full compensation for two pawns. Negi looks further and devotes two pages to analysing **20.♗xa6**



I don't know whether this is indeed better for White (somehow I always believe the side with the two bishops) but what impressed me was Negi's evaluation in the following position: **20...♔e7 21.♖h3 ♖g8 22.♗d3 ♗d2 23.♘f1 ♗h6 24.♘e3 ♗xe3 25.♖xe3 ♖xg2 26.a3 bxa3 27.b4**



Stockfish 7 stays rooted to an evaluation of 0.00, but play any sensible sequence of 10 sensible moves and the evaluation steadily rises to a clear advantage for White. It's that element in the book – the ability for a strong GM to decide for himself what he believes irrespective of what the computer evaluation says – that makes this series so remarkable and so enjoyable to read. ■

NEW IN CHESS

Sunil Weeramantry

CURRENT ELO: **2099**
DATE OF BIRTH: **September 11, 1951**
PLACE OF BIRTH: **Colombo, Sri Lanka**
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: **White Plains, NY, USA**

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Devilled Prawns, Sri Lankan style.

And what drink?
Mango lassi.

Who is your favourite author?
Ray Bradbury.

What book are you currently reading?
The Runaway Jury by John Grisham.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
2001: A Space Odyssey.

What is your favourite TV series?
CSI Miami.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Clint Eastwood.

And a favourite actress?
Eva Green.

What music do you like to listen to?
60s Rock, Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Do you have a favourite painter?
Senaka Senanayake.

What do you see as your best result ever?
4th place on Board 1 with 10/14 at the 1978 Olympiad in Buenos Aires.

What was the best game you ever played?
My win against GM Eduard Gufeld at the 1996 World Open.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Mir Sultan Khan. He showed that an outsider without formal training can successfully challenge the world's best.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
How to Play the Middle Game in Chess by John Littlewood.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Topalov-Kasparov, Linares 1999.

What is the best chess country?
Germany. A rich chess history and well established inter-club competition create a strong chess culture.

What are chess players particularly good at, except for chess?
Thinking outside the box.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
A tendency to live in their own world.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Friendship and support.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
Dishonesty.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
A statesman who does not abuse the public trust.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Johann Sebastian Bach, Benjamin Franklin and Alfred Binet.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Most of the qualities that make an excellent chess player have nothing to do with chess.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
To play the piano.

What's your favourite place in the world?
Sedona, Arizona.

What is your greatest fear?
Losing my memory.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
My first ever chess trophy.

How do you relax?
Watching a game of limited overs cricket.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
Proper marketing of chess to the outside world.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
That you are not allowed to use two hands to move two pieces.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
Whatever nationality the highest bidder would like him to be.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Not in the slightest.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'Why am I still playing this game after all these years?' (A Chess Player's Lament.)

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–Chess Today

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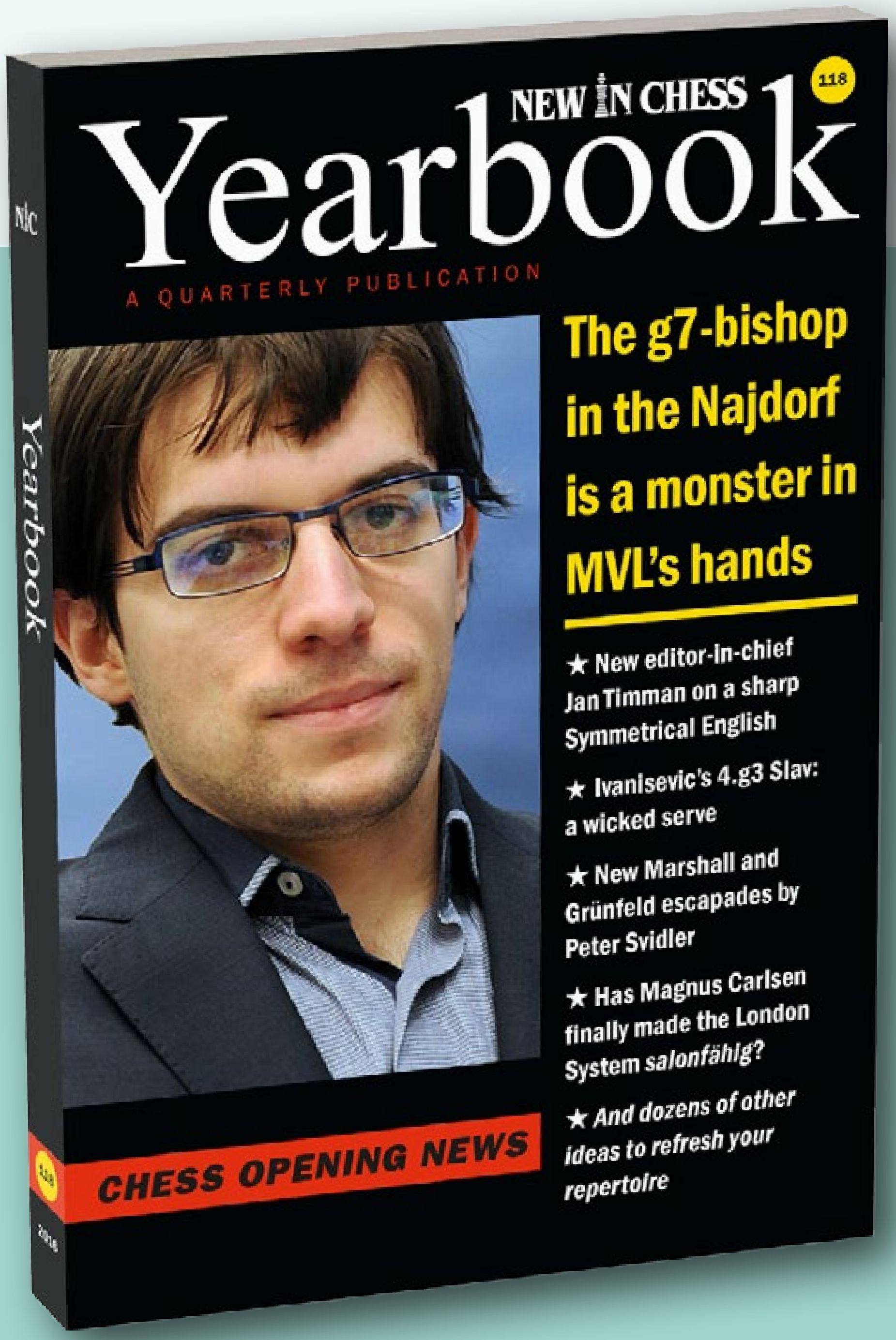
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